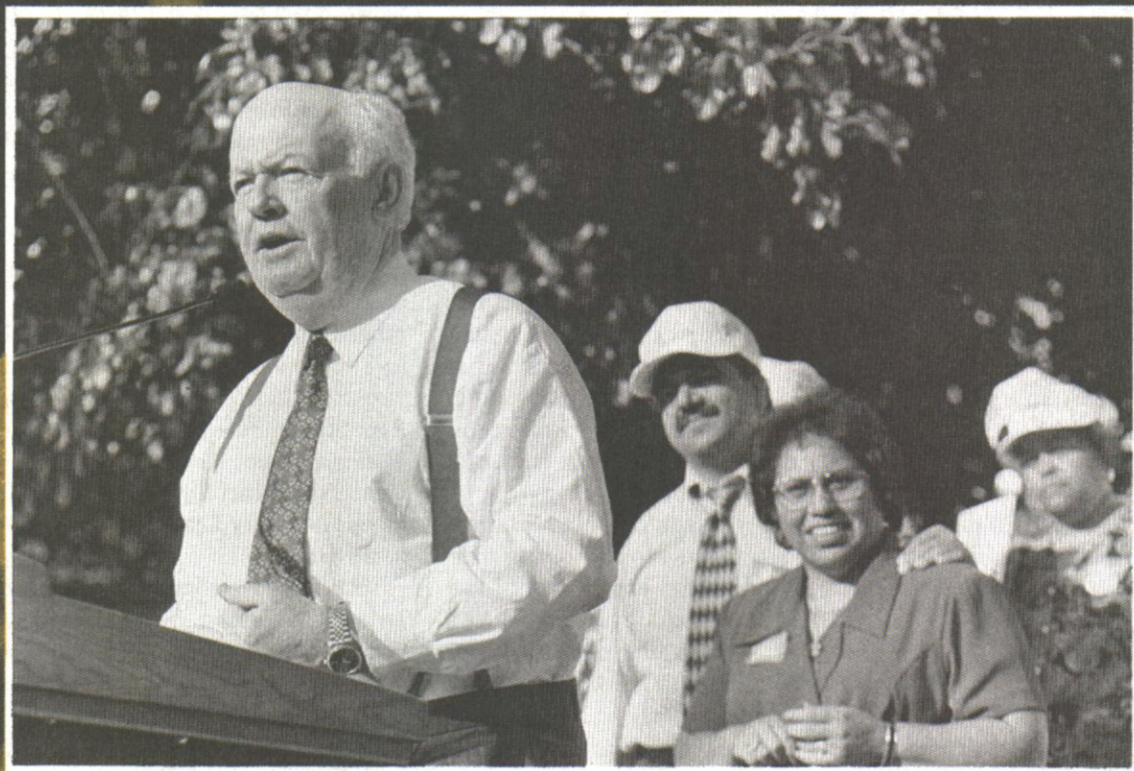


JFK JR.'S CURIOUS GEORGE October 2 - 15, 1995

# In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

## CHANGING OF THE GUARD



John Sweeney is on the verge of  
toppling the AFL-CIO's old leadership.  
Can he breathe new life  
into American labor?

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# EDITORIAL

## THE POLITICS OF THE SINKING MIDDLE CLASS

**T**he stock market is reaching new highs daily, banks are making record profits, inflation has all but disappeared, and the number of millionaires and billionaires is skyrocketing. During the 1980s, the number of Americans earning more than \$500,000 a year rose by 985 percent, even after discounting for inflation. In short, America is competitive again, and business is good.

Yet most Americans, in just about every walk of life, are worse off than they were 20 years ago. Since 1973, real wages have been declining pretty much across the board. During these years the percentage of families with children living in poverty has increased from 11.4 to 18.5 percent, while the number of people without health insurance has reached 43.4 million, and is increasing by 1.2 million a year. The divorce rate has grown steadily over these years, as has the number of women who are raising children alone and in poverty. In addition, an estimated 26 million Americans, more than one in 10, rely on food depositories and soup kitchens to feed themselves and their families.

Nor is it just the unemployed and working poor who are suffering. The so-called middle class is rapidly joining their ranks. A college education or a degree in engineering or law

*The declining fortunes of the middle class have fueled a political culture of blaming the victim.*

are no longer tickets to a secure and comfortable life, much less to a productive and satisfying one. Millions of Americans who expected to do better than their parents instead experience falling wages and one temporary job after another. In the face of corporate downsizing and the export of skilled work to cheaper labor markets overseas, the once-comfortable middle class now finds itself joining the ranks of those living on the edge.

These developments have been traumatic—and bewildering—to those who were led to believe that they would be solid and secure members of the great American success story. And, in the absence of a left capable of presenting an alternative to the corporate worldview, the result has been frustration and anger directed at the liberals who shaped our social policies over the past several decades. Bombarded by media images and political leaders promoting the idea that what's good for business is good for America, these most recent victims of our business culture have found it easy to succumb to propaganda scapegoating those who are even less fortunate.

Indeed, in these conditions of growing insecurity, it becomes a conditioned reflex to turn on the “other”—the welfare recipient getting a free ride at the taxpayers’ expense, African-Americans allegedly being given jobs denied to more qualified whites—or on “government,” which taxes heavily but gives little back to working people. And Republicans have mastered the art of provoking that reflex, secure in the knowledge that few of their Democratic rivals would attack them for acting as the protection agency for our corporate rulers.

But the Republicans’ success has gone to their heads. With a Democratic president unwilling, and probably unable, to oppose them on a principled basis, they are using the fraudulent issue of deficit reduction to remove as many obstacles as possible in the path of corporate greed. These range from attempts to cut back on Medicare and Medicaid to a bill that would halve the funding for federal legal services to the poor and convert it into state block grants. Republicans have also gleefully voted to cut funds for the National Labor Relations Board, which under Clinton has turned more friendly to workers, and from the EPA (which House Majority Leader Richard Armey infamously likened to the Gestapo).

Such naked arrogance is matched only by the personal style of their most dynamic leader, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who, to take just one example, recently announced that New York City was wallowing in a “culture of waste” at the same time that an independent counsel was appointed to investigate his \$4.2 million book advance from media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

Have the Republicans gone too far? Do the Democrats have an opportunity to turn the tables, if they begin to fight back? We believe they do, and there are signs that Clinton will swing back to the left in the next several months in an effort to give the party’s base something to vote for in 1996. But even if that effort is successful, there will be no underlying change until a left develops a strong response to the same insecurities in the electorate that the GOP has superficially capitalized on. For that to happen, leftists need, more urgently than ever, to challenge the idea that our country’s welfare depends on unfettered freedom for corporate profiteering. ◀

## IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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# LETTERS

## On the road again

As Mr. Wimsatt states (*ITT*, July 24), I, too, bet my life on the good people of America. I am a 60-year-old female, and, though I don't hitchhike, I do take road trips every year, traveling on two-lane highways. As much as possible, I sleep in my station wagon. I've been doing this since 1988, and I've found only friendly people out there in the great U.S. of A.

Everyone I tell of what I do thinks I'm one insane lady, but I've had a lot of fun being unparanoid.

Diane Reimers  
Jackson, Wyo.

## Clean and cocky

In his "Bet with America" (*ITT*, July 24), William Upski Wimsatt is telling us nothing us that we don't already know: that it is possible for a carefree, cocky

white male who keeps his nose clean to be safe wandering around just about anywhere in America.

I would be more impressed if the same experiment was tried by a female of *any* color. My bet would be that her average waiting time to catch a ride would be a fraction of his—and even less to be attacked and/or raped. The only thing this article is proving is that it is still a man's world—if you're white, that is.

Fern Wayman  
Revelstoke, British Columbia

## Sub what?

William Upski Wimsatt (*ITT*, July 24) refers to the "suburban mentality" as the source of America's deepest problems. This anti-suburban bias is common among the left. But because good public policy is dependent on

categories that are at least roughly congruent with reality, I suggest we consider that the suburbs are not "sub" anything any longer.

There are now more people living, and voting, in the "suburbs" than in many cities. And the suburbs are quite heterogeneous. They include some reasonably integrated communities, some all-white and some all-black communities, and some very poor and some very wealthy communities.

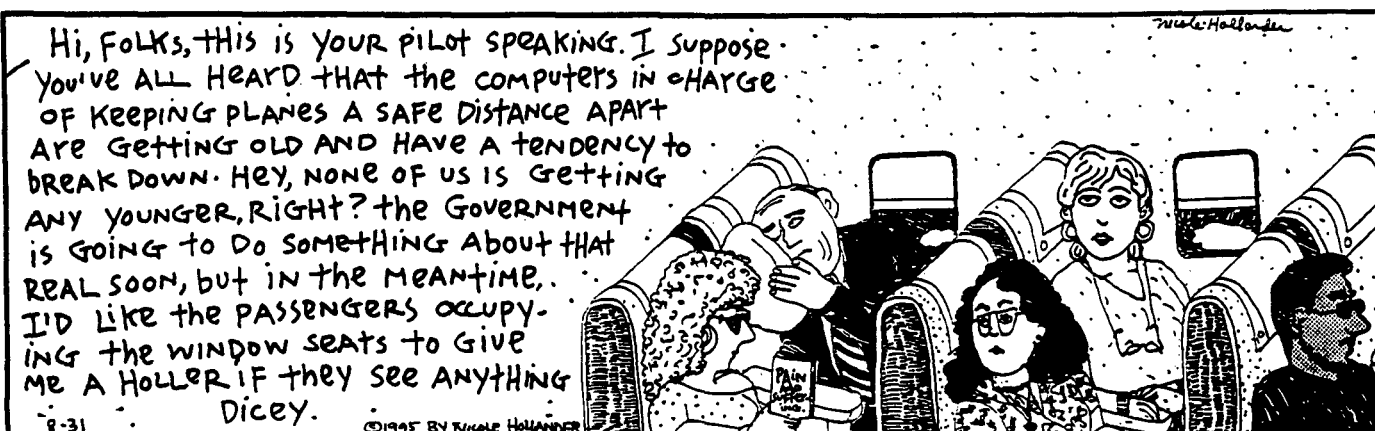
The people who live there are not running away from anything these days. There are literally generations of people who are suburbanites. They were born and raised there, to and by people born and raised there. The suburbs have become viable communities, and, just as in urban areas, there are jobs, schools, churches, gangs and drugs. And many of the schools are more racially mixed than many city schools.

When we moved from Brooklyn to the Chicago suburbs about 25 years ago, 90 percent of the people from the city's northwest suburbs who worked outside of the home worked in Chicago. Today, 70 percent of those working outside the home work in the suburbs. In other words, the economic dependency of the suburbs on the city is diminished. The dependency may well run the other way these days.

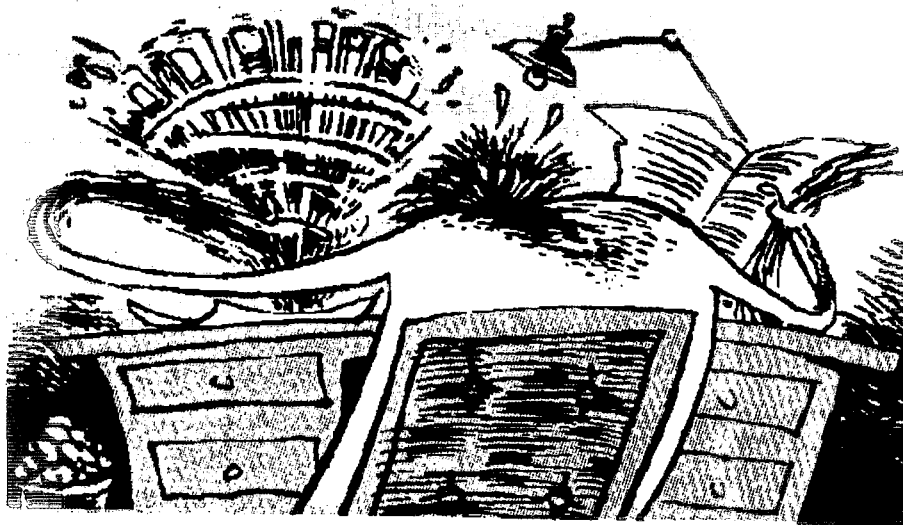
Would Wimsatt also dismiss the people living in cities who live in the white ethnic enclaves and vote Republican? And what about the blacks who

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander







told him to stay out of Homewood?

I suppose you could say they all have a "suburban mentality," but that doesn't seem to advance the analysis or the dialogue. It's hard to see the suburbs as the cause of or cure for the problems of the workers of the Decatur area, for instance.

Secure jobs, good schools, convenient transportation, public safety—these are all goals of people regardless of where they live. In our democracy, it takes a majority of those who vote to win elections, and the vast majority of suburbanites are ticket-splitters. Wimsatt's dismissal of the suburbs is counterproductive from the standpoint of attaining a majority coalition—unless, of course, people take his posters seriously and "bomb the suburbs."

Isn't it time to get serious and get beyond the slogans and stereotypes?

Walter J. Kendall III  
Palatine, Ill.

## Maquiladoras and the AFL-CIO

We work for Sony in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and would like to clarify the July 24 "Etc." column article by Joel Bleifuss. Bleifuss is not familiar with the background of this case, so

we would like to give an accurate account of the facts.

Bleifuss claims that the AFL-CIO did not support us because it is in bed with the CTM, Mexico's official union. As far as our struggle is concerned, that assertion is false.

In April 1995, when we expressed our displeasure with the CTM elections, we were attacked and beaten by our government's police, who were allied with Sony and the CTM. Our rights to meet freely had been violated. And the CTM's elections were a fraud.

Fortunately, we got in touch with the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, a group made up of different religious organizations, women's groups and U.S. labor organizations, including the AFL-CIO. In this way, we gave our struggle an international dimension.

We Mexican workers are not familiar with the U.S. organizations, and we are not in touch with them. Ed Feigen, however, who works at the AFL-CIO and is the organization's representative to the coalition, became very interested in our case, and, thanks to him and other groups, the National Administrative Office (NAO) became aware of our case. They initiated the process, gave us legal advice and helped us to travel to San Antonio, Texas, where the NAO hearing took place.

If it is true that the NAO resolution

was not as effective as we had hoped, it is also true that the AFL-CIO and the other groups mentioned above have given support to our struggle. In addition, they have sent letters and faxes to Sony headquarters in the United States and to Santiago Oñate, Mexico's labor secretary.

Both the AFL-CIO and the Coalition for Justice have supported us through our struggle. With this letter, we want to thank them for all they have done to help us. And we thank you at *In These Times* for your attention.

Maria Guadalupe Carillo García  
Treasurer/General Secretary

Jovita García Hernandez

Secretary of Work

*Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la  
Compania Magneticos de Mexico*  
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico

*Joel Bleifuss replies: It is true that Ed Feigen, the strategic approaches project coordinator at the AFL-CIO, was extremely supportive of the Sony workers. In fact, he wrote the argument that the Sony workers presented to the NAO. But I did not know this at the time I wrote the article, because the AFL-CIO leadership would not allow the organization's name to be attached to a complaint that involved a labor struggle against their longstanding allies in the CTM. Slowly that state of affairs is changing. Last year, the AFL-CIO announced that it no longer considered the CTM the exclusive representative of Mexico's workers. The decision is decades overdue, but it's better late than never.*

## Correction

Due to a production error, a line was dropped in the September 18 "Etc." column at the top of page 11. The complete sentence should have read, "This giveaway would not have passed the Senate without the support of nine Democratic senators, including four whose mere names tend to activate the gag reflex: Sam Nunn, Daniel Inouye, Joseph Lieberman and Dianne Feinstein."

# InSHORT



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## PRIMING THE PUMP

**G**ive Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-AK) this much credit: He knows how to divert media attention. During the Senate Whitewater hearings in July, Murkowski made his way onto the front pages by shaking a few planted items from the late Vincent Foster's briefcase. But few reporters bothered to note the stealth campaign that Murkowski, who heads the Senate's Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, has mounted to allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

Ever since the first crude began flowing through the trans-Alaska pipeline, oil company executives have dreamed of drilling in the ANWR, a protected wilderness region that stretches along the Arctic Ocean from the oil fields of Prudhoe Bay to the Canadian border. Roughly as large as the state of Indiana, the ANWR was created by Congress in 1960, and enlarged in 1980, for the express purpose of protecting the unspoiled ecosystem's "native plant, animal and indigenous human populations."

But today those protections are in danger. Murkowski, with the support of his congressional colleagues from Alaska, Sen. Ted Stevens and Rep. Don Young, is on the verge of completing a major legislative coup for the oil industry. Over the last nine months, the Alaskan delegation has maneuvered legislation through Congress that would lift the federal ban on drilling in the ANWR.



By David Futrelle

## Healthy males

And you thought Bob Packwood was less than contrite about his transgressions: Russian neo-fascist Vladimir Zhirinovsky is convinced that his recent physical assault on a



female legislator on the floor of the Russian parliament will only increase

his popularity, Reuters reports. Zhirinovsky and several others descended upon legislator Yevgenia Tishkovskaya—who had come to the aid of an Orthodox priest under literal attack. They pulled her hair, grabbed her neck and tore off her glasses. Zhirinovsky, for his part, blames the altercation on her, saying she threw herself on the helpless men. "Perhaps she has personal problems and wanted to join a healthy male group," he commented. "One deputy said she got quite excited when she touched a certain part of his body—so the lady got a bit of pleasure."

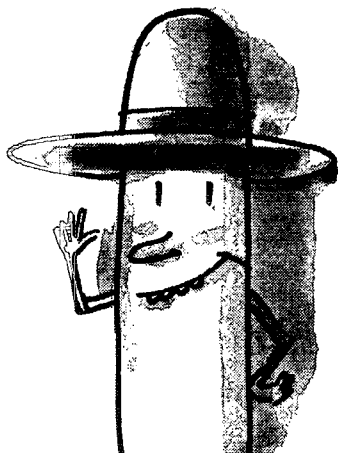
## Blame it on Rio

A recent series of AIDS-awareness ads on Brazilian TV and



radio has stirred up more than usual controversy. After radio ads fea-

turing a man speaking with "Braulio"—the organ that many Americans know as "Little Elvis"—went on the air, the *San Francisco Examiner* reports, radio stations were

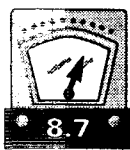


deluged with angry calls from men sharing a name with the loquacious appendage.

Among the other choices the ministry considered were Anastacio, Tonhao and Oscar.

### Can buy me love

Former film star and Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram of India's impoverished, drought-stricken Tamil Nadu province recently hosted what the *London Independent* called possibly "the most



extravagant—and vulgar—marriage [ceremony] of the 20th century"

for her foster son and his new bride. The two-day bash—involving some 100,000 guests, a bevy of elephants and an elaborate set of cardboard palaces designed by film art directors—was estimated to have cost some \$25 million. The proceedings blocked traffic in downtown Madras for several days, and large portions of the city faced blackouts and water shortages because of the party.

Perhaps at greatest risk is the ANWR's tiny coastal plain, a pristine wilderness that teems with bears, migratory birds and caribou. The coastal plain is also, by some accounts, America's largest single oil reserve. Several studies suggest that there is at least a 5 percent chance of finding 4.5 billion barrels of economically recoverable oil under the coastal plain—a drop in the bucket of U.S. energy demand, but a potential bonanza for oil companies clamoring to lease the spot. However, since opinion polls have consistently shown drilling to be prohibitively unpopular, legislators have been reluctant to consider any legislation to reverse a 1980 congressional ban on drilling in the region.

Enter Murkowski, who recently collected fat campaign contributions from Chevron and British Petroleum. With the Republicans in control of Congress, Murkowski and his allies have been able to coax a series of drilling initiatives through both houses. In February, Murkowski began a bizarre series of hearings in the Energy and Natural Resources committee that—without directly discussing the ban on ANWR drilling—nevertheless laid the groundwork for lifting the ban. While pointedly excluding industry critics, Murkowski invited oil company officials to discuss the "cleanliness" of modern drilling techniques. He also encouraged company scientists to speculate about the size of the ANWR reserve—though neither Murkowski nor the scientists specifically broached the subject of lifting the drilling ban. When environmentalists at the latter hearing attempted to talk about the dangers of removing the ban, Murkowski moved swiftly to block any mention of the ANWR.

But the real legislative master stroke came in late May, when the Republican leadership inserted a provision into the 1996 budget reconciliation agreement that would clear the way for ANWR drilling. On September 19, the House Committee on Resources approved that provision. If, as appears likely, the final 1996 budget currently being assembled in Congress retains this provision, a signature from President Clinton will circumvent the longstanding drilling ban—all without attracting any attention. Conservationists, however, hold out hope that President Clinton will try his own circumvention, by signing an executive order declaring ANWR a "National Monument Area," thus reinforcing the drilling ban.

The National Congress of American Indians, the government of Canada and virtually every conservation organization on the continent oppose the legislation. Drilling, they say, would likely devastate the fragile tundra ecosystem. "Can we really take such a huge gamble with the planet's only remaining Arctic primeval frontier?" asks Miller. Unfortunately, Congress may never have a chance to publicly debate that question. —Douglas Johnson

## SHOWDOWN IN MOTOWN

After eight weeks under siege by 2,500 striking workers, Detroit's embattled daily newspapers have called in air support. In an effort to thwart picketers trying to block its printing plant gates, Detroit Newspapers, the agency that runs the combined business operations of the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*, hired helicopters on September 10 to airlift a combined Sunday edition of the papers over recalcitrant picket lines.

Costly and impractical, the airlift was less a solution to a short-term distribution crisis than a gesture to strikers—a message, production and distribution workers say, that Detroit Newspapers is prepared to break their unions. Management at the *News* and the *Free Press* seems equally determined. "We're going to hire a whole new workforce and go on



without unions," *News* publisher and editor Robert H. Giles boasted in August to the *St. Petersburg Times*. "Or they can surrender unconditionally and salvage what they can."

Other management officials have denied charges of union-busting, but the newspapers and their jointly owned operations agency have been hiring permanent replacement workers for weeks. The *Free Press*, which editorialized only last year against the federal law that allows the permanent replacement of strikers, offered to reinstate its striking journalists, but only if their guild would break ranks with the five other striking unions, cut their own deal and agree to cross any and all picket lines.

Six striking unions, representing workers at both newspapers and their joint production facilities, have thus far bargained as a single council. This strategy, the unions reason, adds leverage to their individual strength. While each union has its own quarrels with management, their unifying grievance concerns changes in pay policy. Because Detroit Newspapers realized close to \$1 million a week in profits last year, employees expected a chance this contract year to recoup wage concessions they made three years ago. But instead of the cost-of-living increases unions expected, management came to the bargaining table this spring offering a merit-pay scheme. In addition, Detroit Newspapers demanded job cuts to eliminate what it characterized as "featherbed" positions imposed by its craft unions in previous bargaining agreements.

But the issues that led the unions to strike have been overshadowed by the strike itself. Despite the efforts of federal mediators, bargaining between management and union officials has proceeded slowly. More time is spent debating who is responsible for picket-line violence—strikers, some of whom heave bottles and bricks at company security guards and trucks; or the riot-clad local police force, which periodically wades through the picket line with riot clubs swinging and has taken hundreds of thousands of dollars from the newspaper agency to defray its overtime costs. As each side becomes more intransigent, the strike has come to be regarded here as a test of labor's ability to assert its bargaining rights.

The potential consequences of such a test are not lost on organized labor and its supporters. "[This strike] is one of the most important we've had in Detroit," says former mayor and one-time union firebrand Coleman Young. "If [the newspapers] get away with this, it's open season on the labor movement."

—Ric Bohy

## SWEAT SURRENDER

In August, federal investigators discovered 72 garment workers, most of them Thai immigrants, doing slave labor in a sweatshop in El Monte, Calif. Working behind barbed wire for long stretches with no breaks, the workers—who were all women—stitched millions of dollars worth of garments sold by stores such as Neiman Marcus, Filene's and Montgomery Ward. The conditions in El Monte were especially appalling, but similar sweatshops have become a familiar feature of the American economy. The General Accounting Office estimates that more than 50,000 people—most of them female immigrants who speak almost no English—work in 4,500 sweatshops in New York City alone.

According to the *New York Times*, the Labor Department has only 14

## MEDIA WATCH

By Jennifer Gonnerman

### Murdoch's web

When reporter Pavia Rosati wanted to write a story about the recent Jerry Garcia vigil in Central Park, she didn't just grab a notebook and pen. She also took along a digital camera and audiotape recorder. Only a few hours later, her story was finished. Written on a psychedelic pastel-colored background, Rosati's story featured not only visuals (color photos), but also sound (a recording of Deadheads singing Garcia's greatest hits).

All of this was possible because Rosati works for a new online venture started by Delphi, the computer network owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. and MCI Communications. Known as the News Center, it is scheduled to go online—and be renamed—within the next few weeks. Based in Manhattan, but available to all of the Internet's World Wide Web users, the News Center purports to be the first venture to produce news specifically for the Internet.

To some, Murdoch's new venture is yet another indication of the Internet's bright promise. But there is a fear that Murdoch, whose media properties are worth roughly \$20 billion, may find a way to monopolize the new medium.

"It won't be a monopoly like television or radio," says Frank Beacham, who writes a technology column for the Alternet news service. Unlike broadcasting over the airwaves—which remains tightly restricted—"anyone can set up a web site like News Center's," Beacham notes. And,



conceivably, anyone with a reasonably powerful personal computer can access the material at any web site. The problem Beacham foresees is that Murdoch will be able to dominate the Internet through marketing. "Can an ordinary person promote his or her web site on a television network, in a daily newspaper, on a radio station? Whoever can buy the greatest presence is going to have the greatest number of people coming to their site."

There are popular Internet services that list a wide variety of web sites, but now some of those services have begun charging hefty fees to their customers. It's a problem facing Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), the progressive media watchdog group, which has its own web site. Sam Hussein, FAIR's activist coordinator, notes that his group can't afford to advertise its web page because the listing services are simply too expensive. "Murdoch is going to be able to be listed wherever he wants," Hussein notes. "This is a way of strangling out the little guy."

investigators to police New York's sweatshops—which works out to a case-load of more than 312 locations per investigator. Nationally, the department has only 900 investigators.

Given this paltry level of enforcement, President Clinton's plans to include 202 wage-and-hour investigators in his \$1 billion legislative package to battle illegal immigration seem to offer hope to badly exploited undocumented workers. But labor activists have some serious reservations about the president's expansion plans.

What worries them is the likelihood that the new investigators will turn in illegal immigrants to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for deportation. It's a reasonable fear: A 1991 agreement between the INS and the Department of Labor requires labor investigators to notify the INS of work-sites employing illegals. The agreement also made labor's job of ferreting out abusive employers more difficult. "In labor law enforcement, you can't make an enemy of both workers and employers," says Ursula Levelt, policy director for the Center for Immigrants' Rights in New York. "Unless the workers feel safe, they won't cooperate [in investigations]."

Before the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which instituted fines for employers of undocumented workers, illegal immigrants largely fell under the provisions of existing labor laws. Increasingly, the 1986 law has pushed undocumented workers into jobs with unscrupulous employers willing to flout the fines. And such workers have no legal recourse if they are fired for otherwise protected actions like organizing against abusive working conditions.

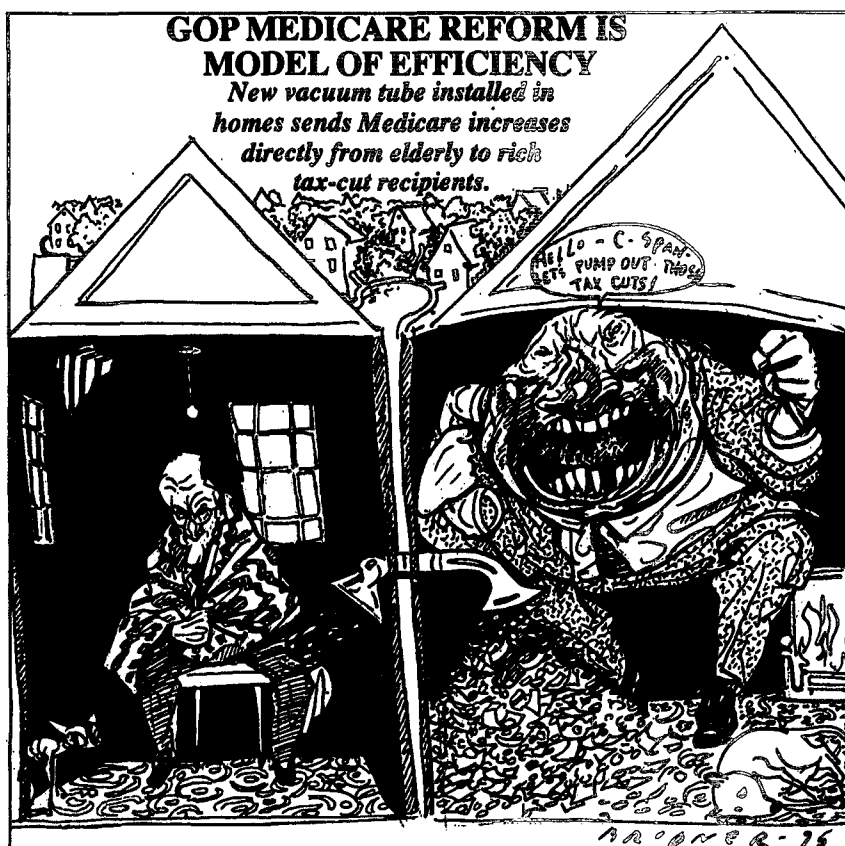
With mounting congressional hostility toward both immigrants and the poor, undocumented workers can expect scant federal protection. And Labor

Secretary Robert Reich offers no substantive relief. On September 12, Reich negotiated a deal with 17 national retailers, ostensibly to curtail abuses like those in El Monte. Made behind closed doors at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, the agreement does little more than stipulate that retailers put explicit references to the Fair Labor Standards Act in their contracts with manufacturers. With fair treatment left in the hands of sweatshop owners interested in turning a profit at any expense, undocumented workers will likely be left to fend for themselves.

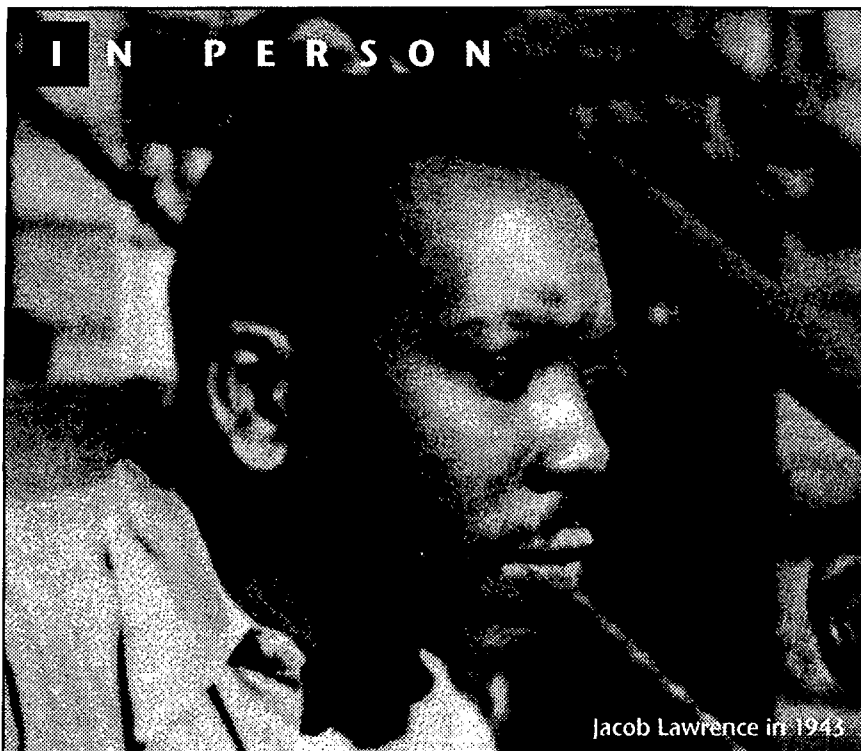
—Barbara Snow

Tomorrow's News Tonight

By Steve Brodner



## IN PERSON



Jacob Lawrence in 1943

A HISTORY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS

## PAINTING THE PROMISED LAND

*Jacob Lawrence documents the American scene*

**Series of 1940-41.** The 60-panel series, which concludes a two-year national tour with a show at the Chicago Historical Society starting September 22, shows the cubist-expressionist, social-realist mixture that remains Lawrence's style today. It also reveals the artist's immersion in the rich traditions of oral history handed down among blacks in the migration communities of the North.

Born in New Jersey in 1917, Lawrence was not literally part of the migration, but he was part of the migration community. His parents had moved north from Virginia and South Carolina, and Lawrence's mother eventually settled with her children in Harlem. Like most of his peers, Lawrence spent his adolescence in great poverty, struggling to make ends meet by running errands, delivering newspapers and digging ditches for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). But he also spent much of his time studying African and African-American history. He took an after-school arts and crafts class with painter Charles Alston, who sent Lawrence to sculptress Augusta Savage's WPA art class at the Harlem Community Center.

His street scenes made him the premier printer of Harlem during the Depression, and in 1936 he began working on his first historical series, about Haitian slave-rebellion leader Toussaint L'Ouverture. But it wasn't until 1938, when Savage secured him a job in the WPA Federal Art Project, that Lawrence could fully apply himself to painting and studying. "If Augusta Savage had not insisted on getting me onto the project," Lawrence said later,

"I wasn't outside looking in. I was part of it," the painter Jacob Lawrence says of the great northward migration of Southern blacks early in this century, which he depicted in *The Migration*

ETC.

By Joel Bleifuss

### Knock on Packwood

Former Sen. Bob Packwood (R-OR), his dirty linen on the line, has retreated back into private life. And that is just fine with his one-time colleagues. After all, further investigation of his liaisons would only reveal that whoring with lobbyists is a permanent pastime in Congress rather than a periodic lapse.

The Center for Responsive Politics, however, is not content to let Packwood off so easily. The Washington-based group, which tracks the commingling of money and politics, has filed four complaints with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) concerning apparent violations of campaign finance laws during Packwood's 1992 Senate campaign.

The center is asking the FEC to investigate the following cases:

- In October 1992, the National Rifle Association (NRA) spent \$22,613 sending a letter to its members opposing Packwood's challenger, Rep. Les AuCoin (D-OR). Before the letter was sent out, Packwood approved the text—which means that the cost of the NRA mailing should have been considered a direct contribution to the campaign rather than an independent expenditure. On Oct. 6, 1992, Packwood wrote in his diary, "God, is it tough! ... Now the question is: Are they going to do a second mailing just before—the postcard about 'get out and vote.'?"

- The Automobile Dealers and Drivers for Free Trade PAC, which is the political arm of foreign-car dealers, also helped re-elect Packwood with a phony independent expendi-



ture. On March 20, 1992, Packwood wrote in his diary: "Apparently the Automobile Dealers are willing to do some spending against AuCoin. Of course, we can't know anything about it. We've got to destroy any evidence we've ever had of [name deleted] so that we have no connection with any independent expenditure." The expenditure in question exceeded the legal limit by \$65,539.

- The Oregon Republican Party and the National Republican Senatorial Committee, under the leadership of Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX), spent \$55,291 more than the \$240,183 that they were legally permitted to spend on the Packwood campaign.

- The National Republican Senatorial Committee further supported the Packwood campaign with illegal "soft money" contributions, funds that were laundered through the Oregon Republican Party to Packwood. On March 6, 1992, Packwood wrote in his diary: "[Gramm] again promised \$100,000 for party-building activities. And what was said in that room would be enough to convict us all of something." From April through July 1992, the National Republican Senatorial Committee transferred an apparently illegal \$96,500 to Oregon.

"It is very rare that you get a written record—close to an admission—of an attempt to violate the law. These diary entries seem to be just short of a signed confession," says Elizabeth Hedlund, head of the center's FEC Watch. She has hope that the FEC will, in this case, do its job. "The more visible the case is, the harder it is for the agency to ignore it."

"I don't think I would have ever become an artist. I'd be doing a menial job somewhere. It was a real turning point for me."

As part of the federal project, he painted a series on Frederick Douglass in 1938-39 and another on Harriet Tubman in 1939-40. A series on Harper's Ferry raider John Brown followed in 1941. "I'd heard of their feats from the elders in such an emotional and dramatic way," Lawrence recalled later. "I wanted to paint them, because they were left out of the American story."

But it was *The Migration Series* that gave him the kind of national exposure usually denied black artists. From 1942 to 1944, the series toured the country—albeit not the South. *Fortune* reproduced 26 of the paintings. To the magazine's publisher, Henry Luce, integrated factories, which the migration made possible, betokened America's progress toward the ideals of freedom, equality of opportunity and self-reliance. New York's Museum of Modern Art and Washington's Phillips Memorial Gallery together bought the series for \$2,000 and divided the canvases between them.

Lawrence's success, coupled with a stint in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II and travel and teaching outside of New York, broadened his horizons and—as Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson have argued in their *A History of African-American Artists*—mellowed the rage that inspired his earlier work. Lawrence's simplified forms, two-dimensional compositions and limited color range gradually gave way to a more decorative, upbeat and complex approach to painting.

"I painted the only way I could paint at the time," Lawrence says, suggesting that mood alone did not create the directness of his early work. As his knowledge of techniques broadened and as he began teaching, he began to pay more attention to form. "The early years are some of the stronger years of my life as an artist. I always hope that my later work will have the scope of my early work. That is very hard to do because you learn so much in those 50 years."

Still, Lawrence's rage does seem to have cooled. He objects to the label "protest painting." He declined a 1980 invitation from the Carter White House to honor his paintings for protesting discrimination. "I never use the term 'protest' in connection with my work," he says. He even argues that *The Migration Series*, with its images of somber folks forced to flee their homesteads, is more exuberant than sad. "We have a great country, the United States of America," he says now. "And the migration was part of the development of the country. I look at it as triumphant."

What never changed is Lawrence's creation of figurative, narrative art, even at a time when abstraction became the norm. He has, after all, stories to tell. In the mature years of his career, he has infused his work with his love of tools and building, passions he developed as a boy in Harlem watching carpenters and furniture-makers at work. "Tools are so perfect," Lawrence says. "Look at a picture of hundreds of years ago—the tools are still the same. A tool is an extension of a person." In his depictions of watchmakers, carpenters, seamstresses, barbers, cabinetmakers and shoe repairmen—and in the numerous canvases he titled *Builders*—he emphasizes the crucial role of common people, particularly blacks, in American history.

"I paint the things that I know about and the things that I have experienced," Lawrence once said. "The things that I have experienced extend into my national, racial, and class groups. So I paint the American scene."

—Wim Roefs

# T H E F I R S T S T O N E

## MINE GAMES

By Joel Bleifuss

In 1993, Amcord, Inc. was in a bind. Amcord, a subsidiary of the world's largest coal mining conglomerate, Britain's Hanson Industries, was claiming that it had cleaned up its Amcoal strip mine on Navajo Nation land in New Mexico. But since nothing had grown on the site since its reclamation, federal regulators suspected that the company's cleanup was not what it seemed. Officials from the U.S. Office of Surface Mining (OSM), an Interior Department agency that oversees 5 million acres of abandoned and working coal mines, notified Amcord that they intended to test the topsoil that the company had spread across the mine site. In an effort to block the testing, Amcord turned to Robert Uram, a corporate lawyer who had been providing the company with legal services since 1986. In April 1993, Uram threatened to sue the Interior Department to stop the OSM. Uram never followed through on his threat. And when the OSM finally tested the site, it found that Amcord had "reclaimed" the land using dirt contaminated with coal mining acids.

Just seven months later, President Bill Clinton nominated Uram to the same agency he had threatened to sue in the name of the world's largest coal conglomerate. (See "The First Stone," September 18.) Earlier this year, when asked by the *Albuquerque Journal's* Richard Parker about his efforts to circumvent the nation's environmental laws, Uram replied, "Whatever I did, I did."

But whatever else Uram has done since taking over the OSM may never see the light of day. Though the dirt at the Amcoal mine is now public, other controversies involving this Interior Department agency have disappeared into a devious filing system devised by the OSM's new management.

We do know what Uram *hasn't* done—force Amcord to clean up the mess it left at the Amcoal mine. For two years the Citizens Coal Council, a coalition of 31 community groups from mining towns across the nation, has been investigating the agency's cozy relationship with the coal companies operating on Navajo Nation lands in New Mexico and Arizona. For example, the council wants to know why the agency overlooked a series of blasting violations that occurred at the BHP-Utah International mine near Farmington, N.M., in 1993.

For the past two years the council has filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests in an attempt to dislodge pertinent documents from the agency. OSM management has responded to these requests by hiding evidence of alleged wrongdoing in a dual filing system.

This shell game is described in a February 9 memorandum leaked by an anonymous source at the OSM. In that memo,

Stephen Rathbun, the head of enforcement at the OSM's Albuquerque field office, informed Thomas Ehmett, the field office's acting director, of an "illegal" attempt at the OSM to hide public documents. Rathbun explained that the OSM's regional office in Denver had asked him to check if Albuquerque had copies of three letters requested by the Citizens Coal Council. Rathbun found one of the documents, a June 9, 1994 letter from the president of the Navajo Nation, Peterson Zah, to Bruce Babbitt. The letter, which has not been made public, concerned the department's policy at the problem-plagued Black Mesa mine, a strip mine on the Navajo reservation that is owned by Hanson Industries-Peabody Coal.

Rathbun reported his discovery to Jennifer Shawe at the OSM's Denver office. Shawe instructed Rathbun to remove that letter from the public files and put it in a "private file." She said that at Denver they found copies of all three letters, and, under orders from OSM officials in Washington, had removed the letters from public files—which Shawe referred to as the OSM's "green files"—and placed them in "private files."

According to his memo, Rathbun refused to cooperate because he considered such a filing system "illegal." He wrote: "[Shawe] became somewhat agitated and wanted to know what my problem was with removing the file. ... She stated that [the Denver office] does it all the time. ... She closed by indicating that she would be informing her superiors [at the OSM in Washington] about [our] failure to remove the document."

The next day, according to Rathbun's memo, Cheryl Sylvester, a lawyer at the OSM solicitor's office in Washington, called Albuquerque and ordered that the letter be



removed from the public files. When the Albuquerque field office requested that Sylvester put that order in writing, she refused.

Ernest Diswood, a member of the Nenahnezad Chapter of the Navajo Nation, believes that the OSM is withholding the documents, in part, to prevent him from gaining access to them. In the 1980s, Diswood had worked for the permitting department at BHP, helping the Australia-based company win the right to open a strip mine on the reservation. Consequently, Diswood is familiar with the details of that original BHP permit, and is thus the one person in the community who could easily spot any violations of that original agreement.

At a February 9 news conference, called by the four Native American community organizations that belong to the Citizens Coal Council, Diswood and another member of the Nenahnezad Chapter's technical committee, Ray Benally, both demanded Uram's resignation for failing to enforce the laws governing coal mining. In response, Bruce Babbitt issued a statement that read, in part: "When I swore Bob Uram in as director of the Office of Surface Mining nearly one year ago, I said that he was exactly the right person for the job. He still is. Since that day, he has fulfilled every expectation I have had for that very difficult assignment."

Three weeks after calling for Uram's resignation, Diswood was fired from his job as a range conservationist at the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Benally was fired from his job at the Navajo EPA, which receives the bulk of its funding from the federal EPA. Both men say that they lost their jobs because they called for Uram's ouster, and they plan to prove so in court.

According to another leaked memorandum, the OSM mounted a second effort in June to stop the release of information about its shady dealings on the Navajo reservation. In a June 21 memo, Arthur Abbs, the acting director of the Albuquerque field office, instructed everyone under his command that all correspondence, minutes of meetings and trip reports must first be cleared with him before the document is inserted into a file and made part of the public record.

In light of the Rathbun memo and Abbs' order, the Citizens Coal Council requested that Interior Department Inspector General Wilma Lewis investigate the apparently illegal alteration of records, the possible crime committed when Rathbun was ordered to purge OSM files and Abbs' clampdown at the OSM's Albuquerque office. On August

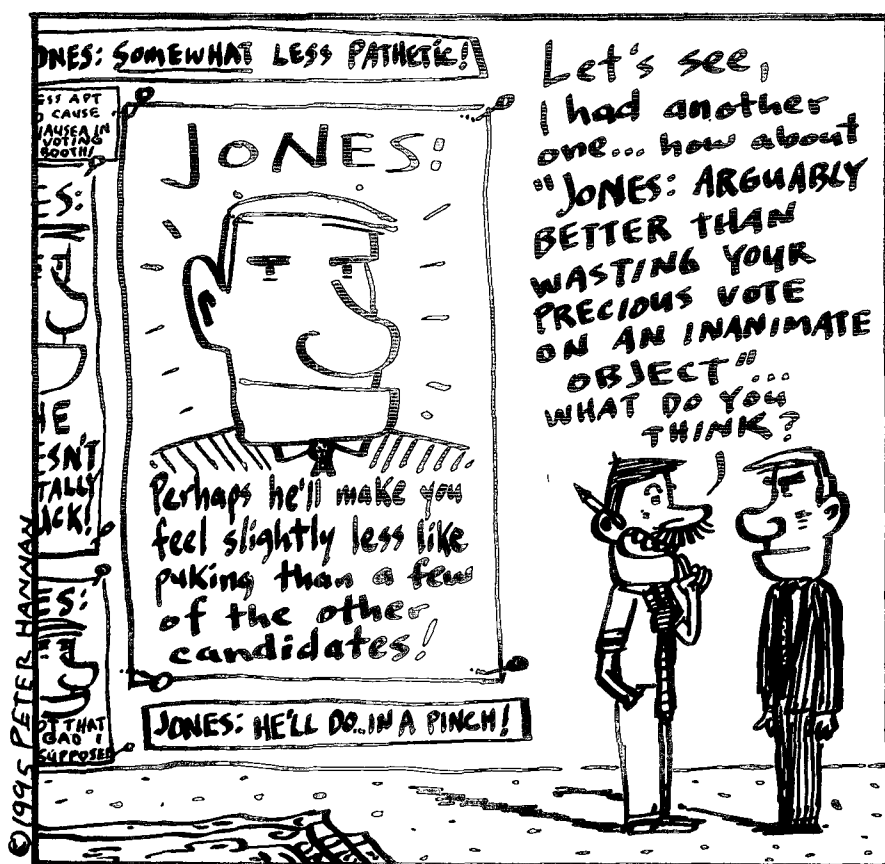
31, Inspector General Lewis gave the OSM 90 days to file a formal response to the Citizens Coal Council complaint. Alan Cole, the OSM's public affairs chief, denies that the agency operates a dual filing system. "There are no private files," he told *In These Times*.

Meanwhile, the Citizens Coal Council's efforts to clean up the agency may all be for naught. Even if the council does succeed in reforming the OSM, congressional budget cuts could cripple the agency. Congress plans to cut roughly \$25 million out of the agency's \$110 million regulation and enforcement budget. And Uram intends to balance the OSM budget by firing about 300 lower-level employees, including several mine inspectors. The Citizens Coal Council proposes instead that Uram realize savings, not by firing the people who inspect mines, but by cutting the OSM's upper management, which Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review concluded is grossly top-heavy, encumbered by "an excessive layering of management."

In an open letter to Babbitt, Citizens Coal Council Chair Barney Reilly called on the interior secretary to intervene. "[I]f Mr. Uram is allowed to cut into the muscle and bone of OSM," Reilly wrote, "your administration will have completed the job begun under Ronald Reagan and James Watt of rendering Interior's only environmental enforcement agency totally impotent." ◀

## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



**L A B O R**

# Changing of the guard

**K**eith Kelleher has devoted most of his life to proving that it's possible, contrary to conventional wisdom, to organize the lowest-paid, least-skilled and most transient workers in America into unions. That includes the roughly 10,000 home-care health workers in Illinois whom he has organized over the past dozen years into Local 880 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Devoted to his members, skeptical of big shots, Kelleher is an admirer of John Sweeney, the soft-spoken but surprisingly militant president of the 1.1 million-member SEIU. "What I like," says Kelleher, "is the first question Sweeney always asks anyone: 'How's the organizing going?'"

*John Sweeney  
is on the verge  
of toppling  
the AFL-CIO's  
old leadership.  
Can he breathe  
new life into  
America's  
labor  
movement?*

By David Moberg

That is likely to be the first question Sweeney asks his union colleagues in coming years if, as is almost certain, he wins the presidency of the AFL-CIO at the fed-

eration's convention this month. Sweeney's victory is likely to trigger a major transformation in the culture of the labor movement, away from a failing defense of embattled members and toward an aggressive strategy of organizing to expand workers' power on the job and in the political arena.

It won't be quick or easy, but the first signs of change are already evident—nowhere more so than at the SEIU, where Sweeney's support for innovative organizing tactics has helped it become the fastest growing union in the nation. Indeed, rising frustration with the ponderous and ineffective leadership of the AFL-CIO under former President Lane Kirkland spurred a coalition of many of the federation's biggest unions to demand that Kirkland step down earlier this year.

At first the coalition, led by Sweeney and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) President Gerald McEntee, hoped that union leaders could unite behind AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Donahue as Kirkland's suc-

cessor. Although a Kirkland loyalist, Donahue was seen as more open to new ideas—a transition figure both Kirkland supporters and opponents could endorse.

But Donahue wouldn't challenge Kirkland. On May 5, a few days before Kirkland declared his intention to run for re-election, Donahue retired, declining to take on the eight-term incumbent. Yet by June 12, Kirkland finally recognized that he would lose and announced that he would leave office in August. Donahue quickly announced that he would seek the presidency, and Kirkland embraced him as the candidate of "measured change." But the anti-Kirkland coalition had already settled on a ticket led by Sweeney, with Mine Workers President Richard Trumka as candidate for secretary-treasurer and Linda Chavez-Thompson, an AFSCME vice president from Texas, as candidate for executive vice president, a new position they hope to create on the model of the Canadian Labor Congress.

At its August meeting, the AFL-CIO executive council elected Donahue and his candidate for secretary-treasurer, Barbara Easterling of the Communications Workers, to fill out three-month terms until the convention. But in that election each council member—no matter how small his or her union—had one vote. If the election had been conducted on the basis of union membership, as it will be this month, Sweeney's ticket would have won handily.

On the surface Donahue, 67, and Sweeney, 61, are remarkably similar—both are Irish-Americans who hail from the same big janitors local in New York City. They've been friends since 1960, when Donahue recruited Sweeney into the local, and they've served together amicably on AFL-CIO committees. Until May, in fact, Sweeney and his current backers were singing Donahue's praises as a successor to Kirkland.





So, Donahue backers ask, what's wrong with him now?

The answer lies less in differences of personal philosophy than in the competing forces within the labor movement that each candidate represents. "Waiting for Kirkland's blessings put Donahue in debt to the conservatives," argues one central labor council president. Donahue's delay means that he would owe his election—and his fealty after the election—to the more conservative bloc, rather than to the insurgents. In particular, it would affect his appointments. The degree of change at the AFL-CIO will depend not just on ideas and programs, but on finding talented people to implement them. Because Sweeney is the candidate of an insurgent bloc, he would be more inclined and able to drastically reorganize the federation, reallocating money to emphasize organizing and sweeping out many of the entrenched staff. In the eyes of one Sweeney backer, both candidates are centrists, but Sweeney leads a center-left bloc while Donahue heads a center-right constituency. Sweeney thus would take office with a stronger mandate for change.

The campaign itself has already set off a healthy competition to see who will push innovation faster. After years of a white male monopoly on labor's top leadership, both tickets now include a woman—a Latina in Sweeney's case. When Donahue was elected in August, he promptly announced plans to implement much of what Sweeney had already proposed in his platform. In some cases, he even upped the ante. Sweeney had promised to train 1,000 new

union organizers over the next two years at the federation's six-year-old Organizing Institute, which has won widespread plaudits for its work. Donahue swore he would train 1,500 in his inaugural speech. "It sounded familiar," Sweeney says drolly of the speech. "But I'd be glad to raise him to 2,000 if we find the resources."

Donahue, again duplicating what the Sweeney slate had proposed, went on to pledge greater diversity among leaders, better public relations efforts, broader involvement in AFL-CIO decision-making and new training of grass-roots political activists. Two initiatives were entirely Donahue's own: advocacy of a tough ethical practices code and consolidation of the AFL-CIO's controversial overseas institutes, which use government and union money to influence labor unions abroad. But Donahue had no explanation for why these ideas, which he said he has long advocated, had not been implemented earlier.

Since labor's rank and file isn't entitled to vote for AFL-CIO president, the race, unsurprisingly, has hardly stirred the imagination of most union members. But the Sweeney candidacy has inspired many local leaders and union staff, even in unions whose presidents are committed to Donahue. The contest has also piqued public interest in unions, as the Sweeney ticket in particular has joined picket

Supporters of AFL-CIO presidential candidate John Sweeney at a Chicago rally.

lines and protests around the country. "The campaign has been the best opening for communicating with the American people in my memory," asserts AFSCME organizing director Paul Booth. "It's also internally a stimulus to soul-searching, re-examination and debate." Others view Sweeney's challenge as an important precedent for mounting intra-union contests for leadership. "When John Sweeney is an insurgent," one top Sweeney aide says, "it opens the room for lots of others."

Momentarily it looked as if an insurgency organized by building trades unions backing Sweeney would knock off Robert Georgine, president of the normally staid AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department and a close ally of Kirkland and Donahue. But Georgine offered the No. 2 spot in the department to an official from the Carpenters union, which has backed Sweeney. That move undercut opposition to Georgine from the Carpenters and secured his victory in August. Donahue strategists still hope to shift several building trades unions into his camp, but top officials of those unions say they're sticking with Sweeney, who still has nearly 60 percent of the total votes committed to him.

Though some of the exchanges in the race have been bitter—and Donahue backers like American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker warn ominously of permanent factions emerging—most union leaders will soon bury the hatchet. For example, Communications Workers President Morty Bahr, normally part of the progressive bloc but now an aggressive Donahue backer, said he resented the devious manner in which Kirkland's critics made their challenge. Nevertheless, Bahr insisted that after the election "we'll come together because we have to."

Although their personal differences are not as great as the gulf between the blocs they represent, Sweeney and Donahue's career paths suggest that they would be quite different as AFL-CIO president. While Donahue joined the AFL-CIO staff in 1973, Sweeney has spent the bulk of his career with the Service Employees, winning the presidency of his 70,000-member local in 1976, and rising to the top of the international union in 1980.

Donahue backers argue that his long experience at the AFL-CIO means that he can deal more adroitly with national political issues and the workings of the federation bureaucracy. But Donahue opponents say he's a prisoner of the stifling AFL-CIO culture. "Tom is a bureaucrat who favors bureaucratic solutions," says one top AFL-CIO official who privately supports Sweeney. "John Sweeney is a bureaucrat, but he's out there acting. ... I see the contest as over which side can mobilize a working-class-based movement that [can regain] political power. That's what scares some Democrats, who want a lapdog labor movement. That's what scares business, which fears a movement that mobilizes and organizes."

Sweeney has been able to give strong leadership to a union that has historically been highly decentralized, with locals that ranged from conservative and even corrupt to

militant and liberal. As president of the New York janitors local, a powerful but hardly progressive union, Sweeney sought to strengthen the bargaining power of the city's building service employees by merging his local—comprised largely of men—with another New York local made up mostly of women. He realized that "if you don't organize every day you disappear," according to Stephen Lerner, former head of the SEIU's best-known organizing campaign, Justice for Janitors. In New York, Sweeney succeeded in organizing new janitors, and he even ventured into other areas, such as home-care workers. He also led two strikes, "so he knows on a gut level what it means to fight employers," Lerner says.

Shortly after Sweeney took over as president of the SEIU in 1980, he commissioned a study that reported frankly on the international's impending financial crisis. Sweeney moved to reorganize the union, expanding the small international union staff and hiring imaginative and talented young people, many of them with backgrounds in left politics and militant unionism. He gave them the freedom to try new tactics, and when they proved themselves in practice, their budgets grew. Sweeney is perhaps best known for countenancing—even encouraging—the use of civil disobedience tactics in organizing. The now legendary Justice for Janitors campaign has used sit-ins and other unorthodox methods to win many of its organizing drives. (See "Cleaning house," May 1.)

Under Sweeney, the SEIU has launched other innovative campaigns along the lines of Justice for Janitors, such as Dignity, an ambitious campaign to organize nursing home workers. The SEIU has also encouraged further organizing among home-care workers, hospital workers and other service-sector employees. Sweeney has dramatically shifted union expenditures, devoting 30 percent of income directly to organizing; when indirect support is counted, that figure jumps to nearly half of the SEIU budget. Most unions dedicate well under 10 percent of their resources to organizing. It is true that roughly half of the 475,000 members added to the SEIU under Sweeney came in through mergers with other unions. But the union's support has allowed many of the merged affiliates to thrive, transforming them into aggressive centers of organizing, with current members acting as volunteer organizers.

Sweeney has sought to broaden the SEIU's base by working with 9to5, the national organization of working women. Together they launched a special clerical workers unit, District 925. And Sweeney has also backed various initiatives in "minority unionism," which organizes workers to act as a union on the job even though they do not have a contract or even majority support. This tactic has been advanced in particular by five locals that the SEIU has formed in conjunction with ACORN, the organizing group that targets low-income communities.

The SEIU has also championed strategies that use the bargaining strength of unionized employees to help organize nonunion workers. For example, in California SEIU members at Hillhaven nursing homes were authorized to strike in



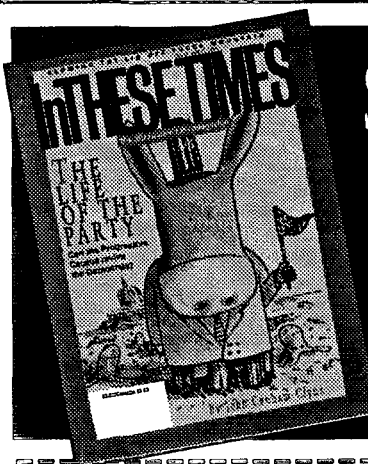
September over several issues, notably an agreement from management to remain neutral in future organizing drives at Hillhaven—which the union successfully obtained. Increasingly, Sweeney has promoted efforts to organize by large geographic area or industry—often sidestepping National Labor Relations Board elections—rather than conducting drives site by site.

Beyond Sweeney's impressive public record, however, he remains something of a mystery personally. Even people close to Sweeney often find him an enigma, a shy, self-effacing but genial man. Though he grew up in a working-class New York household, he graduated from college with a degree in economics and started in the labor movement as a researcher at the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. While hardly a charismatic figure, he inspires his staff and, according to longtime associates, easily connects with workers on a personal level.

Sweeney's record is not without a few nicks, however. Acting as Kirkland's right-hand man on health care reform in 1993, he opposed the single-payer model backed by many of his current allies. A caucus within the SEIU has also criticized him for accepting a large consulting fee from his New York local while serving as president. The caucus has also advocated more internal democracy, including direct election of top officers. But Sweeney has tolerated such disagreement within the union more than most presidents do.

Sweeney's experience in leading a decentralized union should serve him well in the fractious AFL-CIO, where the president has limited power. Sweeney has promised to implement a series of initiatives, including a transnational corporate monitoring project and an office for strategic planning. Of course, there's always the danger, given the AFL-CIO's history, that Sweeney's new initiatives could become bureaucratic sinkholes. But, given his record at the SEIU, it seems more likely that Sweeney will use the reorganized AFL-CIO to fashion a more coordinated, cohesive labor movement. For example, by offering funds for a well-chosen, large-scale organizing campaign, the AFL-CIO may not only spark more organizing but also inspire cooperation among unions.

By "linking together" the labor movement's still considerable political and financial resources, SEIU organizing director Andy Stern argues that "the AFL-CIO can use the power we have to get more." Currently most unions in the AFL-CIO, and most operations within each union, tend to go about their work without being linked to a common purpose. As president of the AFL-CIO, Sweeney is likely to focus the federation, as he did the SEIU, around a single goal: organizing. His goal is organizing on a vast scale—a million workers a year for the next 20 years. That effort, if successful, will reshape the American workplace at least as dramatically as did the CIO drives of the 1930s and '40s. If Sweeney's effort succeeds, it will not only rebuild the labor movement, it will radically change American politics as well.



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**BLACK AMERICA**

# Cop out

# S

*The lenient treatment of an off-duty Chicago cop who killed a homeless black man speaks volumes about police racism.*

By Salim Muwakkil

Shortly after midnight on July 30, Joseph Gould was working as a "squeegee" on the streets of Chicago's trendy River North district. Gould, a homeless man, was dashing from car to car, washing the windshields of passing motorists when he encountered Gregory Becker and his girlfriend leaving an area nightclub. Becker, an off-duty Chicago cop, reportedly took offense at Gould's aggressive sales tactics and ultimately fired a 9 mm bullet through the homeless man's head, killing him. Becker—who is married and reportedly was anxious not to be found in the company of his girlfriend—quickly fled the scene and would likely have escaped detection were it not for alert witnesses who noted his license plate number.

But the prosecutor and the judge dropped murder and manslaughter charges against Becker, citing conflicting witness accounts

and insufficient evidence. The white, 35-year-old police officer was charged only with two counts of official misconduct for failure to report a shooting and for firing his weapon.

Becker's lenient treatment is this city's contribution to the unfolding national debate about police racism and corruption. Though police racism usually sparks little interest outside the black community, a string of astonishing stories have spurred a broad, if temporary, national debate on the subject. In August, the nation was treated to the virulently racist remarks of Los Angeles Police Department Detective Mark Fuhrman, whose words were captured on audiotapes obtained by O.J. Simpson's defense team. And police departments in Philadelphia, New Orleans, New York City, Detroit, Cincinnati, Minneapolis and Washington have all been in the news recently regarding the behavior of their "bad apples."

Still, the Chicago story remains a particularly egregious study in how the system is structured to protect the misdeeds of its enforcers. "The Becker case is a perfect example of how the system is actually in collusion with corrupt police officers," says Patricia Hill, a 15-year Chicago cop and president of the city's African-American Police League (AAPL). "Just as the Los Angeles criminal justice system protected and promoted Fuhrman and the thousands of other Fuhrmans in its ranks, the system here immediately reacted to protect Becker. It's a cultural impulse on the part of white institutions."

Hill is part of a new breed of black police officers who are outspoken in their denunciation of racist actions and expressions both within police ranks and in the department's community relations. Her group, the AAPL, was founded in the late 1960s, and the militance of the era shaped its character. Members were routinely harassed by department brass, and it required a series of lawsuits by the group to force the adoption of mild affirmative action measures.

Because of varied affirmative action policies, many departments made modest gains in recruiting black cops during the 1970s and 1980s. Since 1972, the number of black police officers has doubled to more than 60,000. According to a report in the *Wall Street Journal*, the nation's 50 largest police departments increased the number of black officers by an average of 36 per cent between 1982 and 1992. But black cops still complain about biased treatment and increasing numbers are beginning to speak out against the system's structural racism.

"We must remember that the very first police forces in this country were the slave patrols, so certain racist assumptions are designed into the very structure of policing in America," says William Geller, associate director of the Police Executive Research Forum, a Washington-based

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group that studies law enforcement issues. "Racism is prompted and exacerbated by the economic fears of whites, and police are seen as the thin blue line protecting them from their fears. That's the structural set-up that gets us in so much trouble."

Geller has authored and edited several books on the subject of police abuse of force, including *Police Leadership in America: Crisis and Opportunity*. Geller, a white researcher, is considered one of the most knowledgeable commentators on issues of policing. His recommendations echo those long heard in the black community. "Police must be more informed about, and culturally sensitized to, the communities they serve and lose that us-versus-them mentality," Geller argues. "Instead of being bad-guy chasers from the outside, police have to be intimately involved in helping to build more competent communities."

Philadelphia, a city that during the tenure of Police Chief Frank Rizzo epitomized the model of police-as-community-adversary, is once again gaining notoriety for its corrupt cops. So far six officers have pleaded guilty to charges of setting up innocent victims, tampering with evidence, selling drugs and brutalizing people, mostly poor black people in the city's 39th District. Consequently, 46 of their criminal

convictions were overturned, and federal investigators have since expanded their search and subpoenaed logs of as many as 100,000 arrests over 10 years.

"All of the officers involved so far have been white and all of the victims black," explains Lesley Seymore, a veteran Philadelphia cop and the chair of the National Black Police Association (NBPA). "Despite the gross racial disparity, folks in Philadelphia say this not an issue of race, just police corruption. Well, I respectfully disagree," she says. "Racism is pervasive in this police department and in just about every other one in this racist country. But in the departments there is a strict code of silence. And outside the department, the general society would rather deny this racism exists. All of this denial accounts for the fact that so little has changed in police culture. Mark Fuhrman was no aberration; neither was the beating of Rodney King. The only aberration was the technology that enabled other people to witness those routine occurrences."

But even after witnessing the savage mauling of King, a Simi Valley jury not only acquitted the officers involved, it condoned their behavior. And Becker, the off-duty Chicago cop, so far has escaped all but the mildest charges for killing Gould. A similar pattern is emerging in the wake of the Fuhrman tapes. Widely read *Chicago Tribune* columnist Mike Royko, for example, devoted

a recent column to a reader's angry response to his earlier criticism of Fuhrman. Although Royko kept his distance from the reader's views, he provided a lengthy excerpt.

"I would challenge you and all the other hypocrites who are so quick to condemn Fuhrman to walk in some young cop's shoes for six months," Royko's respondent wrote. "You might find it hard to suppress the 'N-word' from your thoughts. ... If it weren't for the Fuhrmans out there, our society could soon be another Rwanda or Botswana. There are a few of us—maybe more than you think—who realize this."

Royko's reader likely expresses the thoughts of many citizens, both white and black. The specter of criminal anarchy grows more ominous as the gap between rich and poor grows wider.

One of the predictable results of the economic restructuring that has slashed company payrolls and sent so many U.S. jobs overseas is a sharp rise in the ranks of the discontented. And, as Geller notes, it only follows that clashes between the most discontented and the forces of order also will increase. Thus Geller is not surprised by the recent proliferation of tales about police misconduct and racism.

Also unsurprised are members of the NBPA. At its



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national convention in Orlando in August, the group was besieged by media people eager to know what effect the Fuhrman tapes would have on the NBPA's agenda. "I told them that the issues raised by the Fuhrman tapes are the reason we exist in the first place; it's always on our agenda," explains Ronald Hampton, the group's executive director.

Hampton spent 23 years on the Washington, D.C., police force and is convinced that zero tolerance for racism from the top is the only way to eliminate the Fuhrmans within police departments. "When an officer is found guilty of some manifestation of racism, fire him or her on the spot. If you can't work with the people who make up our communities, then you have no business being a police officer," Hampton says.

There is a consensus among critics of the prevailing police culture that the best chance for reform lies in the widespread adoption of "community policing" strategies, which require officers to work more closely with local residents. "We need to broaden the training," says Hampton. "We need to alter our reactive policing strategy and completely transform our policies to work in closer concert with the community." Hill of Chicago's AAPL argues that current policing techniques are completely inappropriate. She even proposes that police be renamed. "If we called ourselves 'Domestic Peace Officers' it would help reorient our thinking. We must become community citizens, not protectors of the white supremacist status quo."

Many veteran officers dismiss the community policing concept as an inappropriate, "bleeding-heart" strategy dreamed up by effete sociologists. Despite this attitude, arguments in favor of the concept are slowly penetrating the calcified ranks of department brass. Variations of the concept are being implemented in numerous cities, and it appears that it may be the policing trend of the future. But the change will be hard-fought.

"I've seen some small changes in the Philadelphia Police Department," notes the NBPA's Seymore, "but even the tiniest change required tons of effort. Our efforts within the various departments will only be successful if we get political support and encouragement from the community."

Perhaps the public outcry following the Fuhrman tapes will help generate support for efforts to uproot racism and corruption within police departments. But judging by past experience, these efforts will likely be short-lived. Following the videotapes of the Rodney King beating, for instance, the high-profile Christopher Commission was empaneled to investigate and suggest reforms for the LAPD. The commission found numerous problems and made many recommendations—few of which have been implemented.

As Geller notes, this country's widening social divisions increasingly place police on the firing line. And unless a strong social movement suddenly arises—one that demands economic reforms as well as police accountability—we are on track for more trouble between police and those they allegedly serve and protect. ◀

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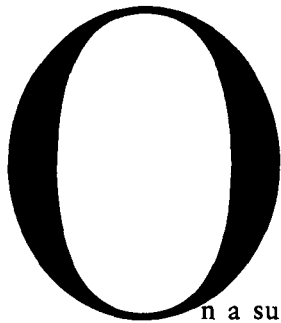
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## M E D I A

# Spurious George



*Welcome to  
the ad-heavy,  
empty world  
of JFK Jr.'s  
"lifestyle"  
political  
magazine.*

By Rick Perlstein  
NEW YORK

On a sunny morning in front of the New York Stock Exchange, stock barons and their jobbers are rubbing shoulders in one of corporate America's new, strangely egalitarian rituals: the outdoor cigarette break. Around the corner of Pine and Nassau Streets, Chase Manhattan Bank looms 71 stories over an expansive plaza that is empty save for two girls smoking under a 30-foot sculpture by Jean Dubuffet, the French artist who tirelessly championed the creativity of children, the insane, "primitives" and others who would have a tough time establishing a credit line at Chase Manhattan. The gnarled, medieval streets of the financial district will remain dormant until the market closes; it is a routine summer morning on Wall Street.

But things are bustling across the street inside Federal Hall. Knots of crew-cutted, ear-pieced security goons glower at the journal-

ists who are smarming every which way; klieg lights glare down on 35 news cameras arrayed on three separate rostrums; music pounds from the PA—oddly, the musical emcee has selected Public Enemy's defense of Louis Farrakhan, "Don't Believe the Hype." In the elegant Greek edifice where in 1789 George Washington took oath as the first president of the United States, John F. Kennedy Jr. and his financial benefactor, the Paris-based media conglomerate Hachette Filipacchi, are hosting a press conference to launch their new political magazine, *George*.

As a member of the press, I have an invitation to the conference. But unlike reporters from more mainstream organizations, I am shunted off to a balcony far above the press floor. There I sit fantasizing about the muck-raking questions I would have fired at Kennedy: If your magazine is about the pressing issues of the day, where can I find coverage of plant closings; downsizing managerial corps; the ragged social safety net; the threat posed to

democracy by multinational corporations like Hachette...?

But the answer to my unspoken queries takes shape soon enough: Such issues are addressed nowhere in the magazine. The phrase Kennedy most likes to use to describe the magazine is "post-partisan," and *George* means post-partisan like Ross Perot means post-partisan—neither Republican nor Democrat, but plutocrat. Readers who heft the 280 pages of *George*'s inaugural issue will find, first, an explanatory letter from Kennedy. "Calling *George* a political magazine isn't entirely accurate," writes Camelot's Profligate Son. "Our coverage of politics won't be colored by any partisan perspective—not even mine. *George* is a lifestyle magazine with politics at its core, illuminating the points where politics converges with business, media, entertainment, fashion, art and science."

The conference begins when Michael Berman, *George*'s executive publisher and today's master of ceremonies, steps to the podium. First he fawns over his deep-pocketed patrons. *George* already has an origin myth: Kennedy and Berman pounding the pavement for backers and being told over and over again that politics doesn't sell. In the end, Hachette Filipacchi invested \$20 million to ensure that *George* has (as measured by ad pages) the biggest consumer magazine launch ever. Berman's voice takes on an unmistakably nervous edge when he says: "Our [editorial] staff is only 20 people—rather lean by industry standards. Now you know why Hachette Filipacchi puts out so many profitable magazines."

With 27 titles in the United States and 152 others around the world, Hachette Filipacchi is the world's largest magazine publisher. One explanation for the company's success (tactfully left out of today's press release) is that Hachette is a division of the French weapons conglomerate the Lagadare



Group. But the company's real secret weapon is Chief Executive Officer David J. Pecker, who follows Berman at the mike. Call him the Hachette-man: Pecker has mastered as well as any CEO in America the art of upsizing stock quotes by downsizing the shop floor. His winning formula? Buy a struggling magazine, cut the staff to the bone. He did it at some of Hachette's highest-profile publications: *Premiere*, *Family Life*, *Mirabella*. This last, the smartest and most literate of the women's magazines, was reduced from 12 to six issues a year when Hachette bought it this spring. Amy Gross of *Elle* edits it—during, one presumes, her lunch break.

With *George*, Pecker has varied his typical strategy. "George doesn't fit into any niche," booms the stentorian CEO. "It creates its own niche." In fact, in bankrolling the magazine, Pecker is putting Hachette's considerable might behind creating that niche, initiating an outdoor advertising campaign to ensure "that soon, you won't be able to go outside without seeing a copy of *George* staring you in the face." The first bimonthly issue of *George* boasts a print run of 500,000—almost as large as those of *The Nation*, the *National Review*, *In These Times*, *The American Spectator*, *The New Republic*, *Z* and *The Progressive* combined. The numbers are "unprecedented for a new magazine," barks Pecker, forgetting that *Oui*, a joint Filipacchi Publications venture with Hugh Hefner, sold out a press run of 875,000 copies for its first issue. What is unprecedented for a new magazine is *George*'s ad pages: 175 of them.

Once Pecker is finished musing on the things nearest and dearest his heart—ad pages and upwardly mobile 18- to 45-year-olds, he cedes the podium to John-John. "George doesn't cover politics," Kennedy proclaims. "It celebrates it." Crowned in a halo of flashed bulbs, Kennedy quips leadenly about the magazine's post-partisan editors. "We have someone on our staff who smokes; another who has a crush on Pat Buchanan—I'll have to talk to that guy."

Kennedy's clumsy asides are revealing in one respect. All hitherto existing political magazines imagined their readers as The Virtuous People who, given the right ideas or information, would do the right (or left) thing. But *George* abandons the conceit. What Kennedy calls "post-partisanship" turns out to be a tail-chasing attempt to corral magazine copy that is ostensibly about politics, but that manages, by

eschewing any critical point of view, not to intrude on the vast dream-space of commodity lust. You don't sell 175 ad pages by exposing the underbelly of American politics. You do it by producing a doorstep fashion-magazine lookalike.

How, then, does a post-partisan magazine read? To find out, one must venture into the belly of the shiny, shiny beast. As it turns out, such journalistic techniques as treating political candidates with critical scrutiny or exposing the interests behind the issues are decidedly partisan. Covering the Washington horse-race culture—who's up? who's down?: That's post-partisan. Once you get the hang of it, any issue can be subject to the Coke-versus-Pepsi treatment: Witness John Kennedy's interview with George Wallace, whose one-time battle cry "Segregation today! Segregation

tomorrow! Segregation forever!" should surely have rendered him unredeemably partisan. But 25 years later, *George* deems a deaf and barely sentient Wallace harmless. Unadorned sarcasm, evidenced in novelist Mark Leyner's dispatch from Richard Lugar's New Hampshire primary campaign, also declaws otherwise partisan subjects. Lugar, of course, proposes abolishing the income tax in favor of a 17 percent tax on consumption. Leyner riffs merrily along about the humorous consequences such a policy might have—pointing out, for example, that under a Lugar administration, a copy of Michael Jackson's *HIStory* would cost \$35.10 and a fat-tailed gecko lizard \$87.75—with-

out ever mentioning the fact that Lugar is calling on billionaires to be taxed at the same rate as paupers. Dwelling on such facts is, presumably, partisan.

Colorful personalities are also post-partisan. Woe to the politician who wants to get some play in *George* but doesn't campaign on a late-model jet-ski, whistle in two keys at the same time and sport some bitchin' pecs. Merely having interesting ideas is hardly enough. Heck, being a power-broker with enough pull to move the earth is probably not enough. And so we find a profile of Ben Nighthorse Campbell, the plain-talkin', Harley-ridin', party-switchin' Native American senator from Colorado; and another of Newt Gingrich's girl-lovin', gay-rights agitatin', brother-dissin' sister. But both stories pull up far short of anything resembling a critical perspective—it's the funkiness *George* is after. And mining the



funkiness vein for all it's worth, *George* has initiated a backpage feature called "If I were president" and written by a different celebrity each month. In this issue, Madonna says that she wouldn't want to be president anyway, but if you held a gun to her head, she'd send Jesse Helms to a work farm and urge people to get along better with each other. Rumor has it that Roseanne Barr was originally slated for this slot. But Roseanne, an unabashed advocate for various downtrodden members of society, ain't post-partisan.

Incoherence also seems to be post-partisan; perhaps because it occludes any political positions that might inadvertently reveal lucidity. In "The Next American Revolution is Now," historian-cum-novelist Caleb Carr attempts to summarize 219 years of American politics in 3,000 words. Instead, he conjures a verbal pudding-pit so diabolical that he sounds like "The Alienist" referred to in the title of his recent best-selling novel. *George's* editors seem to have been rendered completely helpless when faced with sentences like: "The current crises sparked by attempted reform in such areas as immigration and entitlements are not likely to become the battlegrounds of constitutional scholars, but the implications of significant alteration in either area are enormous."

Of course, the real heart of *George's* editorial stance is advertising. Just inside *George's* Cindy Crawford-festooned cover is a three-page spread for Saturn automobiles, then two pages for Tommy Hilfiger clothing. Next come two pages featuring winsome lovelies shilling Guess jeans, then two for Estée Lauder, one for Jeep, one for Giorgio Armani, two for Revlon's scintillating new fragrance, "Fire & Ice," and one for Tiffany and Co.—all this before you hit the table of contents.

Look behind the magazine's justificatory scrim of "post-partisanship" and you find something considerably more banal: rank hucksterism. But there's no news there; magazines have to make a buck, and it would be churlish to gain-say that outright.

Unfortunately for *George*, leaching a political magazine of everything that makes it ad-averse robs it of everything that makes politics interesting. At which one is tempted to say: So if *George* is so bad, and bound to fail, why bother to pay attention to it at all? Dead magazines tell no tales,

right? But at *George*, there's something decidedly more contemporary and more disturbing going on than bad writing and bristling ad pages. A political magazine that refuses to take a stand can only be premised on the widespread assumption that there are no longer any big fights worth fighting—that there are only personalities, horse races, photo-ops. Like any investment worth sinking \$20 million in, *George* addresses a reliable consumer demand: relief from the wearying world of political concerns such as welfare, immigration and warfare.

From behind the fig-leaf-sized claim that there has been a breakdown of interest in party politics, *George* pretends to be a force that will reinvigorate political life. But entirely absent from the magazine's pages is any acknowledgment that contending ideas of America are as much at stake in political debate as they ever have been. Some believe that the rotting of the welfare state portends the end of the republic as we know it; some believe that the endurance of the welfare state portends the end of the republic as we know it. Neither view will have its say in *George*. These are just the kind of opinions—products of real, gut-level political conviction—that the rubric "post-partisan" cannot contemplate.

The idea that politics can be depicted free from acrimoniously contending visions about how best to live is a child's vision of the world. It is also a stock-jobber's vision of the world. In extending a conception of "politics" shorn of any contention deeper than that between Tommy Hilfiger and Giorgio Armani, or Richard Lugar and Robert Dole, or Nasdaq and the New York Stock Exchange—and in doing so under the auspices of media giant Hachette Filipacchi—*George* may well be creating the blueprint for all future attempts by baronies such as Murdoch, Times-Mirror or Disney to create magazines designed to make people think they are thinking about politics, when really they are doing no such thing. In the final analysis, there is nothing in *George* to disagree with or agree with. And if a reader can never wave a copy of a political magazine in the air and say, "This writer is wrong," or "This writer is dead-on," that reader is estranged from politics, not engaged in it.

Almost no political thinker, conservative, liberal or radical, argues for great concentrations of media power in the hands of the few. And conglomerates like Hachette Filipacchi will hardly be well served by fostering critical thought about big political questions.

Thus, it is indeed a routine morning on Wall Street when, across from the Chase Manhattan Bank (after a recent merger, the Chase Manhattan/Chemical Bank), and around the bend from the New York Stock Exchange, David Pecker can look the founders of his company's new "political" magazine in the eye, then pivot on his loafers to scan the assembled TV cameras and the dozens of not-yet-post-partisan journalists, and say of his investment in *George*: "As I look around this room, I can think of only one thing: I'm glad I picked up the check."

Rick Perlstein is assistant editor at *Lingua Franca* magazine.

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## NORTHERN IRELAND

# Can we talk?

**T**o the casual observer, the last year has wrought changes in the political climate of Northern Ireland previously unimaginable, giving hope to many that nearly 30 years of violence and political impasse may be nearing a conclusion. Flak-jacketed troops have been removed from daily patrols of Belfast's Catholic neighborhoods. Concrete pillars and British soldiers armed with automatic weapons no longer block the border crossings between the North and the Irish Republic. And high-level officials in Britain's Conservative government have done something Tories have long sworn they would never do: They've met with Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the hated Irish Republican Army (IRA).

*One year into the IRA cease-fire, the peace process could be in jeopardy.*

By Kelly Candaele

But a year after the IRA announced a complete cessation of its military campaign to drive the British from Northern Ireland—a move that has ushered in a cease-fire among Catholic and Protestant paramilitaries alike—there is growing concern that the conciliation process is breaking down. Nowhere is this apprehension more apparent than in the working-class ghettos of West and North Belfast, the geographical flashpoints in the ongoing struggle between Ulster's Catholic minority and Protestant majority. These districts are war-weary, having absorbed nearly half the casualties of Ireland's most recent round of "Troubles," but they are also the bedrock upon which Sinn Fein and the IRA have built their support.

Carol Cullen, a Catholic mother of two who spent six years in Maghaberry prison for possession of explosives, worries that the cease-fire, which in Catholic circles is taken to be a good-faith gesture on the part of the IRA, is being met indifferently. "There has to be a call for all-party talks within three months," Cullen warns, "or things will go back to the way they were before—and they should go back."

For Sinn Fein, all-party talks—which would include Northern Ireland's unionists and republicans, as well as the British and Irish governments—are necessary to peacefully settle the constitutional, political, social and economic future of the province. It is difficult to predict what the outcome of these talks would be, but they assuredly would not result in the nationalists' ultimate goal of a united Ireland. Nevertheless, such talks would bolster the republican commitment to nonviolence and render more legitimacy to Sinn Fein, which has been largely excluded from the political process up to now because of its ties to the IRA. Sinn Fein also hopes to use the talks to advance the North's political and economic ties to the Irish Republic.

That is exactly the prospect that unionist politicians refuse to countenance. In their view, all-party talks are the slippery slope that leads toward Dublin. Unionist leaders have called for a purely "internal" political solution with complicated power-sharing arrangements they claim will ensure Catholic representation in a Northern Ireland political structure. But the two most prominent Catholic parties, Sinn Fein and the larger Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP), reject any solution that would exclude Dublin from playing a political and economic role in the North. SDLP leader John Hume, whose party has eschewed violence and remains untainted by the culture of intimidation that has grown up around the IRA, is arguably the most popular political figure in Ireland. Like Adams, he fears that an "internal solution" could repre-



sent a return to a Protestant-dominated regime similar to the Northern Ireland assembly at Stormont that the British government dissolved in 1972.

**B**ut before talks can begin, a critical deadlock over arms decommissioning needs to be resolved. When the IRA announced its cease-fire on Aug. 31, 1994, many observers expected that the British would finally follow through on John Major's commitment to a "creative and imaginative" response to the ending of hostilities. But instead of making bold moves toward negotiation, Major refused to accept IRA assurances and demanded that the group use the word "permanent" in describing the end of its military campaign. The British have also demanded significant movement on arms decommissioning before talks could commence, a position that Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring has called a "formula for disaster." While the British have stated that arms surrender applies to loyalist paramilitaries as well, the primary focus has been the IRA, the enemies of British rule.

Adams has repeatedly pointed out that while the IRA retains its arms, what's important is that it is not using them. He also notes that neither the African National Congress nor the Palestinians were given such demands before engaging in peace talks. Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, has stuck firmly to his party's position that giving up IRA weapons prior to talks would be tantamount to surrender, a psychological defeat and tactical mistake that neither Sinn Fein nor the IRA could possibly accept. McGuinness declared recently that there was "not a snowball's chance in hell" of decommissioning as a precondition for talks.

Britain's position on arms, however, has been changing almost weekly depending on which government official is talking. Sir Patrick Mayhew, Britain's secretary for Northern Ireland, recently wrote that he was not demanding surrender of all arms at once, only that the IRA "make a start." What constitutes a "start" is the crux of the issue. For unionists—whose support has become increasingly crucial for Major in his battle to maintain his party's tenuous hold on Parliament—any start short of total surrender of IRA weapons is not subject to negotiation. In fact, the unionists have done all they can to stall the process, all the while taking care not to compel the British to make a deal

**Sinn Fein President  
Gerry Adams**

over their heads. Unionist leaders have been outspoken in opposition to the so-called "Framework Document" prepared by the British and Irish governments as an outline for peace discussions. And the disposition of the Ulster Unionist Party, Northern Ireland's largest Protestant party, is now likely to become more intransigent under its new leader, David Trimble. A hard-liner, Trimble announced shortly after his election in early September that he would never sit down to negotiate with Sinn Fein as long as the IRA still held weapons.

The Irish and British governments, with prodding from the United States, are searching for a way beyond the deadlock, but they are meeting with little success. A mid-September meeting between Major and Irish head of state John



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Bruton expected to produce a joint recommendation on decommissioning was called off the day before it was supposed to be held. The British government's withdrawal—largely the result of pressure from unionist parties—threw the peace process into crisis on the eve of Adams' trip to New York and Washington.

As Adams' trans-Atlantic shuttling indicates, Sinn Fein regards the United States as a sympathetic third party and has worked to involve the American government in the peace process. As a possible solution to the decommissioning impasse, Sinn Fein has suggested "parking" the arms issue in an international commission—preferably under American auspices—while talks commence. Taking that lead, the Clinton administration is pushing for ex-Sen. George Mitchell to lead the proposed international commission on arms surrender.

The overall process is a delicate political balancing act. Major has to assure the majority Protestants in Northern Ireland that they are not being abandoned while at the same time keeping Sinn Fein and the IRA locked into the process. Adams has to keep discipline in the ranks but also provide concrete evidence that the political process will produce real gains. Hardened Irish militants who have seen their friends killed and imprisoned and who have given up the majority of their adult lives to the struggle are not about to abandon that movement for what amounts to a 32-county tourist board.

Many in Ireland believe that Adams and Sinn Fein have so committed themselves to the peace process that a return to terrorism is no longer an option. Sinn Fein, they argue, is not about to sacrifice the political credibility it has won in both Washington and Dublin since the cease-fire—credibility that has allowed the party to raise close to a million dollars in the United States in the last year. "The major dilemma," says Anthony McIntyre, a former republican prisoner and now a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Queen's University, Belfast, "is that Adams can't go back, but the process can't seem to go forward."

But if Adams can't go back, it doesn't mean that the IRA, or a faction of it, is as firmly locked in as he is. If nationalist parties are rebuffed at the negotiation table, many fear, nothing will prevent paramilitaries from resuming terrorism. Leading up to the one-year anniversary of the cease-fire, Adams warned that "hope was beginning to dim," and that London needed to push the unionists forward. President Clinton is scheduled to travel to Ireland in late November. He clearly wants all-party talks to have begun or been called by then. The peace will likely hold until that visit, as the IRA waits to see if Clinton can move the process forward. But if there has been no significant movement by then, everything is up in the air.

If for the past year there has been no real war in Northern Ireland, there has also been no real peace. The province's *détente* is fragile. Provocations have come and passed, but the same sectarian mistrust has persisted. In

November 1994, a post office worker in Newry, Northern Ireland, was killed by IRA gunmen during a robbery. Though the killing was later repudiated by Adams, the incident led skeptics to conclude that an IRA faction was ready to return to armed struggle. And in July of this year, widespread rioting broke out for two days as Catholics vented their frustration over the early release from prison of Lee Clegg, a British soldier who was serving a life sentence for murdering an unarmed Irish girl who ran a British checkpoint in a stolen vehicle. Many Irish observers viewed Clegg's release on July 3—one day before the Conservative Party's leadership election—as a cynical attempt by Major to bolster right-wing and unionist support. Four days after the rioting, Dublin newspaper headlines screamed that a senior IRA commander was touring IRA military units telling them to prepare to resume violence.

This year the "Marching Days"—annual July and August parades celebrating the 17th-century military victories that established Protestant ascendancy in Ireland—took a particularly uncivil tone. Catholics regarded them as triumphalist provocations since the parade routes went through a number of largely Catholic neighborhoods. The predominantly Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), Northern Ireland's police force, was either unwilling or unable to convince loyalist marchers to change their parade routes in the interest of compromise. As tempers flared and Protestants and Catholics stood off against each other, rubber bullets and RUC batons returned to the streets of Belfast and Derry.

It will take much longer than one year to work through the thicket of prejudice and mistrust that spans centuries. Some observers hope that in time both Sinn Fein and new political groups that have broken away from the main unionist parties can begin to focus public attention on issues of economic class as the "national question" approaches resolution. Sinn Fein still advocates a socialist economic program, but it has long been submerged within the struggle for national unification. And ex-Protestant paramilitary David Ervine, now head of the newly established Progressive Unionist Party, has garnered some support from a Protestant working class that feels it has not been well served by the dominant unionist parties. "The jails and graveyards are filled with the ordinary people of Northern Ireland," Ervine says. "Working people need to establish their own agenda for change."

Carol Cullen has never known peace in her lifetime. But through a bitterness that years of discrimination and prison have shaped, she is willing to consider—for now, at least—a compromise for peace. "At the end of the day, the pain has to be put on hold," she says. "My children's future is now."

Kelley Candaele is a writer and political consultant who lives in Los Angeles. He recently returned from Belfast, Northern Ireland.

**POLITICS**

# Women of the world

*The U.N. women's conference in China has forced feminists to confront the gap between rhetoric and reality.*

**Betsy Hartmann**  
HUAIROU, CHINA

**I**f women's progress can be measured by the number of U.N. documents produced on their behalf, then last month's Fourth World Women's Conference in China was a major step forward. At the official U.N. conference in Beijing, governmental delegations hammered out a comprehensive Platform for Action to advance women's rights. The document included calls for women to control their own sexuality and childbearing, to be free of all forms of violence and to have access to credit and inheritance.

Although rhetorical progress was made in China—where roughly 5,000 women met at the official Beijing conference, and another 25,000 gathered in Huairou for a parallel meeting of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—the situation of women in most countries has been worsening, with

economic restructuring, mounting violence and the rise of fundamentalism all taking a heavy toll.

Of course, the gap between rhetoric and reality is endemic to all U.N. conferences, but it raises particularly pressing questions for the international women's movement. Over the last five years the movement has been immersed in official U.N. processes—with women's issues gaining serious attention at the 1992 environmental summit in Rio, the 1993 human rights conference in Vienna and last year's population conference in Cairo. As a result, the movement has gained increased exposure and legitimacy, and the U.N. documents it has influenced have been useful instruments in policy reform. But in the process the international women's leadership has become too tame: a fact that was much in evidence at the NGO Forum on Women in Huairou, the distant Beijing suburb where the Chinese government banished forum participants.

The NGO leaders failed to mount a strong protest this spring when the Chinese first announced their intention to move the forum out of Beijing. Chinese leaders, still smarting from the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, acted after witnessing women's demonstrations in Copenhagen during the U.N. Social Summit in March. Fearing a rash of demonstrations by NGO activists, Chinese officials wanted them moved to Huairou, where they could be more easily monitored and hidden from public view. Many NGO leaders argued that forum participants should accept the Huairou site for the sake of keeping the meeting in China, ostensibly so participants could give a boost to nascent Chinese women's movements. But when the forum finally convened in Huairou, amid considerable official harassment, the NGO leaders remained far too silent about Chinese repression. Although NGO leaders protested in press conferences, they never tried to mount a mass demonstration against the government.

The world press devoted considerable coverage to the Chinese government's heavy-handed role at the forum. Many stories noted that Chinese officials failed to issue visas in time for thousands of women who had planned to attend the NGO forum. And some of the women who were allowed in—notably, lesbian activists and supporters of Tibetan autonomy from China—were harassed by Chinese police. But what media accounts failed to make clear was that the primary targets of the government's repression were Chinese women themselves. Many Chinese nationals expected at the NGO forum were not allowed to attend. Those who did had their presentations screened by security panels, and their activities were carefully monitored. And whenever foreign speakers criticized the Chinese govern-



ment the official interpreters refused to translate their remarks into Chinese.

The Huairou site posed many logistical problems as well. Meeting locations were widely dispersed: getting from one meeting to another required tremendous energy and time, and it was difficult, if not impossible, for many disabled women. And no central location was set aside for activists to congregate and strategize. Add to this the absence of a critical newspaper—both the official NGO paper and that of the China Organizing Committee were bland at best—and you have an effective recipe for muting dissent.

Despite all the obstacles, the NGO forum registered some remarkable successes. As members of the grassroots women's movement networked across cultures and issues, they returned to a number of unifying themes, including a broad condemnation of all forms of violence against women, from domestic battering to rape as an instrument of war; resistance to fundamentalist assaults on women's rights, whether they be from Islamic extremists in Algeria or Christian crusaders in the United States; and opposition to structural adjustment policies imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund that have had severe consequences for poor women and children.

In a series of tribunals, women testified about the many forms of violence they have endured, highlighting issues too often ignored in human rights discussions. A survivor of the genocide in Rwanda talked about her experience. And vivid testimony was given about the sexual trafficking of young women and girls in Asia and Eastern Europe. In addition, some of the "comfort women" of Korea and Japan, who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Army during World War II, were on hand to demand reparations from the Japanese government.

Reproductive rights also drew a good deal of discussion. Health activists debated just how much international family planning policies have changed in the wake of the U.N. Population Conference in Cairo. Rhetorically at least, the Cairo conference endorsed a progressive approach to reproductive health, emphasizing women's self-determination over narrow, target-driven population control programs. Unfortunately, the latter approach still seems dominant in most countries.

In one session at the NGO forum, there was a sharp exchange between women's health advocates and the promoters of quinacrine, an extremely risky chemical sterilization method for women. Although the drug is not approved as a sterilizing agent by either the World Health Organization or the FDA, two North Carolina-based population agencies have been financing trials in Third World countries. In Vietnam alone 30,000 women have been sterilized with quinacrine.

A number of panels addressed how women can secure the right to safe abortion. Strategies ranged from using international human rights covenants to press for decriminalization to putting abortion technology into the hands of

women themselves. As at last year's Cairo conference, various anti-abortion groups were also present, such as the International Right to Life Federation, Human Life International and an Islamic anti-abortion contingent. Although these groups brought their usual pictures of dead fetuses, they did not actively disrupt meetings. Unlike Cairo, however, the Vatican kept a fairly low profile.

At the official U.N. conference in Beijing, Catholics for Free Choice and other women's networks moved to downgrade the status of the Papal state from a non-member state to an NGO. Delegations from Latin America also contained more feminists than at Cairo, further weakening the Vatican's authority. However, the final draft of the Platform for Action still does not guarantee women the right to safe, legal abortion, although for the first time it calls for the review of laws "containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions."

Meanwhile, the U.S. role at the official conference was shot through with contradictions. On the international stage, the Clinton administration has positioned itself as a defender of women's rights, although it has yet to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. And at the same time that Hillary Clinton was condemning assaults on women's rights at the Beijing conference, her husband was pressing welfare "reform" measures at home that will further impoverish poor women and their families. One can only applaud Hillary Clinton's condemnation of China's repressive birth control policies, which limit each family to a single child. But Clinton never acknowledged the role the U.S. government has played in supporting coercive population control measures in countries such as Indonesia and Bangladesh. And, with America serving as the world's major arms producer and advocate of economic privatization, the U.S. delegation's stated commitment to peace and development also rang rather hollow.

After Beijing, the official strategy of the international women's movement will likely be to press for implementation of the Platform for Action, with NGOs monitoring progress. But few resources are likely to be devoted to the task. It will be necessary to move beyond the U.N. framework to rethink and revitalize the international women's movement.

Why is it, many NGO delegates wondered, that the 25,000 conferees in China did not have the courage or the leadership to march beyond the artificial boundaries of the Huairou site to protest openly in Beijing? It wasn't only the Chinese police who were holding us back.

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## I N T H E A R T S

Punching  
the clock

*Spike Lee's  
latest film is  
long on style  
and short on  
substance.*

By Pat Dowell

**T**he best part of *Clockers* arrives first, when Spike Lee opens his new movie about a drug dealer with a mournful procession of crime-scene photos. One by one these flat, impersonal snapshots—dark, grimy and grainy—slide onto the screen. Ugly with blood, the anonymous men and women sprawl on the pavement, the floor, the car seat—mute witnesses testifying, it would seem, that this is one movie that isn't going to glorify the way they got there.

And indeed it doesn't. But neither does it shed any new light on the most-told story in white America's view of African-American life—drugs and violence in the inner city.

Lee stalwartly tries to pick his way between the two genres that govern Hollywood's treatment of gang life: gangsta thriller or earnest social problem film.

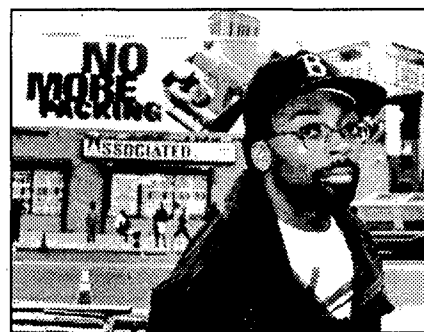
If anything, *Clockers* comes closer to *On the Waterfront* than to *New Jack City*, but fails to deliver on the promise of that grim opening montage of photos. Indeed, the director's struggle to lift his film out of its genre is a more compelling thing to watch than the story he tells.

I can't speak for the merits of the adaptation from Richard Price's big, praised novel, which I haven't read, but the script that Lee rewrote from Price's first draft is one of many things about *Clockers* that seems painfully familiar. Even the movie's poster was originally a dead ringer (or homage, Lee says) for one of the most famous movie logos in history—the stylized silhouette of a dismembered corpse designed by Saul Bass for Otto Preminger's 1959 courtroom drama *Anatomy of a Murder*. And the story of *Clockers* recalls classic B-movie sociology; it's a nominal whodunit with a social-worker conscience. It tells how a young drug dealer named Strike (Mekhi Phifer) is squeezed between his ruthless neighborhood boss Rodney (Delroy Lindo) and an implacable white cop named

Rocco Klein (Harvey Keitel).

Middle-aged Rodney is a corrupting father figure, a sort of Fagin to his teenage clockers (round-the-clock pushers). He suggests to Strike that the road to advancement in his company lies in the murder of an errant dealer. The target turns up dead in the parking lot of a fast-food joint, providing the occasion for one of Price's juicy little arias of street lingo. The man who unexpectedly confesses to the crime is Victor (Isaiah Washington), Strike's hard-working family man of a brother. Klein is baffled (he says Victor's "one of the decent ones"). He thinks he's got the wrong brother, and sets out to demolish Strike's alibi, driving a wedge between Strike and Rodney in the process.

Thus are all these lives opened up to the camera through Klein's quest for the truth, which—do I need to tell you?—proves elusive. Lee dresses up the material with his usual lyricism, but this time it communicates little more than the director's stylishness. Most of the Lee signature shots are here, with a gliding camera coming to rest at expressive angles. There are bird's-eye views with the camera perched overhead, along with those idiosyncratic



**Clockers**  
Directed by Spike Lee

PHOTOS BY DAVID LEE



Rocco Klein (Harvey Keitel)  
interrogates Strike (Mekhi  
Phifer) in *Clockers*.

tracking shots that allow a character to float forward out of a static background. You also get the opposite effect, when Lee sends the background whirling around characters who remain stationary. In earlier films, Lee's poetic asides enlarged his characters; here, it feels as though he's just going through the motions of his virtuosity.

There's a smoldering, undersaturated look to some of the cinematography by Malik Hassan Sayeed. The neighborhood looks as though it were fashioned out of brimstone, not brownstone, and there are white-hot shots in which the light raining down on the characters almost obliterates every detail; Oliver Stone used this particular shot extensively in *JFK*. Not only do such flourishes seem borrowed; they are a cover for Lee's own lack of insight. The same is true of Terence Blanchard's inconsolably wailing score, which smothers the movie in emotional instruction.

Some of Lee's stylistic effusions can still play effectively. A series of jump cuts, for example, illustrates how a neighborhood kid named Tyrone (Pee Wee Love) is transformed (and deformed) by his idolization of Strike. As he tools around on his bike, Tyrone seems magically to echo every costume change the young hood makes. Ultimately Tyrone is at the center of the movie's most shocking act of violence, and it is *Clockers'* one surprise that he doesn't play the role in it you might expect. He is not the corpse but the executioner—a transformation that perhaps serves to remind us that the greatest tragedy for a young black man today is to

be turned into a perpetrator rather than a victim.

Indeed, Tyrone's story is more interesting than Strike's. So is Victor's—and that's one of the movie's weaknesses. Mekhi Phifer is never more than adequate in what amounts to the leading role. Isaiah Washington, in his few scenes as Victor, blows Phifer away with just a look—a thousand-yard stare that hints at Victor's inner exhaustion in his struggle to be a good man. The movie leaves you constantly wanting more of Victor's story and less of Strike's. And here the blame resides not so much in Phifer's performance as in Lee and Price's screenplay, which throws Strike so many banal little bones of humanity that he never comes across as more than a two-dimensional character. He slugs down Yoo-Hoos to salve his ulcers (he's under stress, get it?), and he has a hobby that is all cloying symbolism. Punks of yore used to raise pigeons to suggest the innocent yearning for freedom in their breasts. In *Clockers* it's models trains that spell out the message—HE'S JUST A KID—and suggest with appalling literalness Strike's yearning to escape.

Conveniently, Strike lives not far from a great rail terminus, where he can easily catch a real train for the closing scenes. He's even driven there by Klein, making this the second movie ending with Harvey Keitel dropping off teenaged criminals at the station. (The first was Abel Ferrara's poetic sleazefest *Bad Lieutenant*.) But long before Keitel gets there, I found my mind wandering to the question of what the next Spike Lee movie will be. He is still one of this country's most intelligent and expressive filmmakers when he finds a subject that inspires him. *Clockers*, rife with genre clichés and empty stylistic gestures, defeats him. ◀



# I N P R I N T

## A mother's care

By Felicia Kornbluh and Anore Horton

**C**ontrary to the claims of Newt Gingrich, Bob Dole and Pete Wilson, this is *not* the first time in United States history that the currents of anti-welfare, anti-immigrant and anti-minority sentiment have flowed together to create a powerful political undertow. The current Republican mood recalls not only the racial conservatism of the early part of the 20th century, but also the pro-social policy liberalism that flowered before and after World War I. As Gwendolyn Mink demonstrates in *The Wages of Motherhood*, such attitudes clouded the vision of social policy reformers 70 years ago and set the stage for many of the problems with welfare, health care, and education today.

Mink, a professor of political science at the University of California at Santa Cruz, is part of a growing cohort of feminist scholars who study welfare from the perspectives of women. All of these scholars—including historians Linda Gordon and Sonya Michel and sociologist Theda Skocpol—object to current efforts to unravel the whole skein of the Great Society and New Deal. Unlike mere defenders of the status quo, however, they also insist that welfare has never met the goals of its female clients or creators. The new scholars call the female reformers who drafted so many early welfare laws “maternalists,” to emphasize their focus on mothers and children as the objects of public policy. A “maternalist” is also the female version of a “paternalist”—with all that implies about protection, condescension and distance between reformers and the potentially reformed.

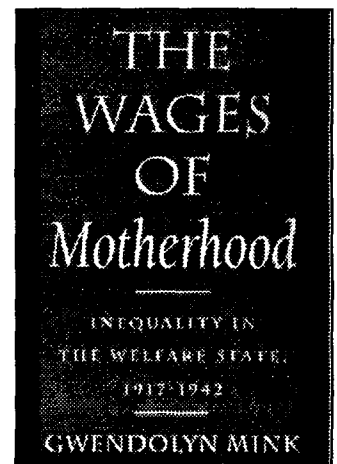
*The Wages of Motherhood* makes several significant contributions to this scholarship. Most important, Mink places racial and what she calls “cultural” differences among women at the forefront of her analysis. Unlike some writers, who have argued that a cross-class feminist sisterhood existed between women reformers and their charges, Mink underlines the chasm that lay between women who had the power to make policy and women who needed public funds and services to keep their families alive. Mink also argues that the maternalists’ narrow view of acceptable women’s roles and their belief in natural racial hierarchies helped create one of the biggest problems with modern politics in the United States. While men who work full-time jobs with

good wages gain access to public money as a matter of right—when they are unemployed short-term, or when they retire—most women and people of color get state benefits only when they can prove to a case worker that they are needy and worthy of having their needs satisfied.

As Mink demonstrates, this core injustice has deep historical roots in U.S. politics. For decades, liberals have engaged in a Faustian bargain with more powerful conservatives. They have gotten help in funding welfare state programs (and administrative control over the programs) in exchange for promising to deliver the good behavior of social service clients. This bargain has produced welfare policies that offer poor women and their children small amounts of money and large amounts of moral supervision. In the early 20th century, liberals and conservatives were able to reach such agreements because of their shared fear of rising immigration and declining cultural unity. They waged a *Kulturkampf* against Southern and Eastern European immigrants—and later against Southern black migrants to Northern cities and Mexican-Americans in the Southwest—in gendered terms. As Edith Terry Bremer of the YWCA’s International Institutes explained, “[T]o America the ‘immigration problem’ is a great ‘problem’ of homes. ... When it comes to homes, women and not men become the important factors.”

Women reformers, most of whom were native-born Anglo-Americans, turned their focus on “homes” into a professional opportunity. They created and managed large-scale national programs for improving maternal and child health, teaching industrial skills and homemaking in public schools, and subsidizing poor women and their children. Among their major achievements were the Sheppard-Towner Act of 1921, which made federal funds available for local efforts to improve children’s health by weaning their mothers from traditional methods of child-bearing and -rearing; the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which reversed decades of opposition to national education spending by providing federal funds for vocational education; and state mothers’ pensions beginning in 1911, which were ultimately superseded by the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC, now Aid to Families with Dependent Children, AFDC) portion of the Social Security Act of 1935.

Although they represented new forms of government involvement in citizens’ welfare, these programs were always limited



**The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942**

By Gwendolyn Mink  
Cornell University Press  
208 pp., \$27.50

by the cultural and class-based biases of their creators. Sheppard-Towner, the first national health care program in the United States, offered practical information to mothers about pregnancy, infant feeding and remedies for common childhood ailments. However, Sheppard-Towner programs also proffered a doctrine of "scientific motherhood" that was clearly out of reach for most rural and working-class mothers, many of whom were raising families in one-room shacks or tenements. In addition, 14 states made it a priority to regulate midwives under Sheppard-Towner. While intended to raise the standard of medical care for rural and immigrant women, in many cases these efforts drove midwives out of business, limiting women's options and even curtailing their access to health services.

Smith-Hughes, the first national legislation to govern education standards, also wrote the traditional gendered division of labor into law: It provided federal funds for industrial training (for boys) and domestic science (for girls). Home-maker training at public expense was justified on patriotic grounds: As future mothers and consumers, girls could serve as the conduits of American habits and citizenship into immigrant or nonwhite communities. An "Americanization through homemaking" course for Mexican-American girls, for example, placed special emphasis on food, substituting "flour, butter and sugar-based ... sauces for tomato-based Mexican sauces of chiles, cheeses and nuts." For salads, the course recommended "boiled spinach served with mayonnaise ... mixed fruits and mayonnaise, a cherry-topped banana with mayonnaise, and ... pineapple and avocado salad with mayonnaise to carry out a green and yellow color scheme."

Other, more draconian "maternalist" policies were less appetizing still. Mothers' pensions combined financial help with moral categorizing that many women found obnoxious. Prior to the New Deal, state pension programs almost always denied benefits to divorced women and mothers of "illegitimate" children on grounds of their supposedly lax morality. Although benefits were notoriously inadequate, white women who supplemented their pensions with wage work often were cut from the rolls—beginning a decades-long tradition of forcing such women to choose between low welfare grants and bad jobs at bad wages. Most black women and Latinas faced a different problem: Pension administrators viewed them more as workers than as mothers and generally prohibited them from collecting benefits instead of working for wages.

When mothers' pensions became part of Social Security under the New Deal, these practices continued. "Suitable home" regulations permitted under federal law allowed state and county welfare administrators to keep the chil-

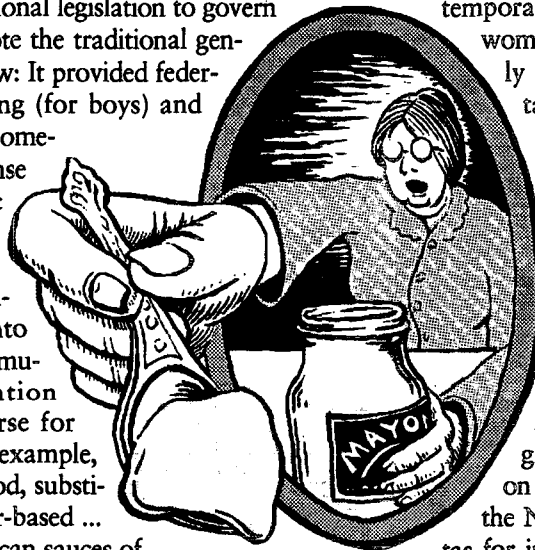
dren of unmarried women away from the public purse. In addition, the federal requirement that ADC mothers be without male support permitted widespread intrusion into their private lives. Throughout the 20th century federally funded, state-administered welfare programs have dispensed their limited benefits only to women who met a narrow and restrictive definition of motherhood: Aid-worthy mothers were women who did not work, did not have sex, kept their children in school and managed to conform to the standards of cleanliness and good child-rearing prescribed for them by case workers.

Such social programs clearly reflected the class and racial backgrounds of the women reformers who promoted them. However, as Mink is careful to point out, most of the contemporary alternatives were far worse. While most women reformers saw black migrants as culturally inferior to Anglo-American white Protestants, nativists and eugenicists saw them as *biologically* inferior as well. This biological ranking system incorporated not only distinctions that we would recognize as racial today, but also distinctions among people of Northern and Southern or Eastern European background, as well as among Protestants, Catholics and Jews.

Early in this century, the legislative responses to nativist and white-supremacist anxiety over the country's changing demographic balance included successive restrictions on immigration. These measures culminated in the National Origins Act of 1924, which set quotas for immigrant groups based on their position in the nativist racial hierarchy. In the 1920s and 1930s, many voters supported (and many state officials practiced) the involuntary sterilization of women and men who were deemed inferior due to their immigrant backgrounds, supposedly loose sexual practices, illiteracy, poverty or irrational preference for speaking a native language other than English.

Mink clearly intends *The Wages of Motherhood* to serve as a primer on what not to do on welfare reform. She obviously rejects the latter-day nativism of politicians such as Wilson and Dole, as well as the biological determinism of pseudo-scholars such as Charles Murray. However, she would also object to continuing the liberal bargain that trades moral and cultural conformity for a few more years of welfare (under)funding. It didn't work when the maternalists of the 1920s tried it, and it didn't work when Bill Clinton tried to revive it in the 1992 elections. Mink's work suggests that, indeed, we *do* need to "end welfare as we know it," and to replace it with a generous, universal system of social protections—something we've never yet had.

Felicia Kornbluh is an associate at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., and is a graduate student in history at Princeton studying the welfare rights reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Anore Horton is a graduate student in history at Princeton studying Latin American immigrants in the 20th century.



# Isle of blight

By Stewart Weaver

He comes, he says, neither to praise nor to bury her. Charles Dellheim is, after all, an American. He can write about the Iron Lady and her legacy from a comfortable distance, and relatively even-handedly. *The Disenchanted Isle* is no diatribe. It is a witty and well-informed account of a "capitalist revolution" that began in February of 1975, when Margaret Thatcher astonishingly deposed Edward Heath as leader of Britain's Conservative Party. That revolution ended, arguably, only months ago, when, in a deeply undignified fit of pique, John Major challenged his Thatcherite critics to put up or shut up and then, to everyone's surprise, sent them packing. Alas, Dellheim, a professor of history at Arizona State University, missed this concluding act: His book takes us only as far as the parliamentary coup d'état that drove Thatcher from power in November 1990. Still, by that time the disarray in which Thatcher was to leave her party and her country was amply evident, and Dellheim is able to achieve some sense of closure. Thatcherism, in his view, was a light that failed, a vital and necessary force when it arrived on the scene in 1979, but one that fell afoul of its own leader's mixture of intellectual pride and moral arrogance.

Good ideas, poor execution—this is Dellheim's ostensibly "balanced" verdict, and it rests on a familiar declensionist version of English history that in crude form goes something like this: Once upon a time Great Britain was, indeed, great. Workshop of the world, mistress of the seas, center of a far-flung empire on which the sun so famously never set, Britain had pride of place as the world's first industrial nation, the birthplace of the entrepreneurial ideal. Through the 18th and early 19th centuries, the British economy went from strength to strength, as each new invention inspired a new generation to staggering feats of efficiency and enterprise. The apogee came in 1851, when what was supposed to be an international exhibition of industrial arts became instead an unrestrained celebration of British technological ingenuity. Housed in Joseph Paxton's famous Crystal Palace, a vast glass and iron monument to the new age of prefabrication, the Great Exhibition represented the ultimate triumph of the entrepreneurial ideal, the high-water

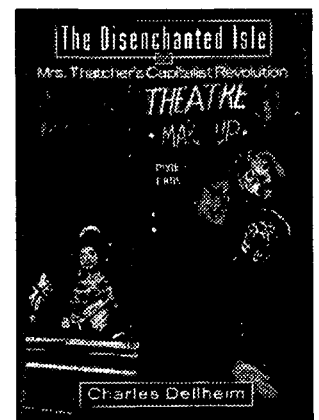
mark of industrial and commercial values.

No sooner had the Crystal Palace closed its doors, however, than the rot set in. As the Medieval Court at the heart of the exhibit suggested, the British were somehow losing their forward-looking nerve. Of course, Blake, Wordsworth and many lesser talents had long bemoaned the soullessness of getting and spending, but in the later 19th century, their lonely ambivalence gave way to a general cultural animus. Rather than drive the landed aristocracy from the seats of power, the British bourgeoisie had succumbed to its charms, aped its ways, adopted its gentlemanly distaste for business and retired to the countryside, leaving its world-historic mission of capitalist transformation woefully incomplete. By the turn of the century, antagonism to industry pervaded the English educated classes, and the inevitable result, according to this view, was first relative and then absolute economic decline.

It was easy to deny at first, this fact of decline (or so Dellheim's story goes). Illusions of continued national greatness took refuge in the growth of the sprawling British Empire. And when the empire finally disintegrated after World War II, social democracy—"the dream of New Jerusalem," as Dellheim puts it—"provided a domestic surrogate." Grand in scope, noble in purpose and distinctive in character, the welfare state not only offered new hope to the working class, it also gave the ruling class "a new sense of mission," a new field of patriotic aspiration.

By the late '60s, however, as the "long boom" of consumer affluence waned, so did the appeal of the welfare state. Edward Heath came to power in 1970 determined to break the progressive consensus and restore a "free market" economy, but a worldwide recession, rising unemployment and wage inflation forced his famous "U-turn" toward centralized management. Labor pulled its own U-turn in 1976, when James Callaghan conceded that he couldn't spend his way out of a recession. At that point, the British government was reduced to begging the International Monetary Fund for a 3.9 billion pound bailout, then the largest in the IMF's history. "The pioneer of the Industrial Revolution had become a charity case," Dellheim writes, "an also-ran in an economic race which it had not run nearly hard enough."

Enter Margaret Thatcher, capitalist revolutionary. "I am not a consensus politician," she memorably said on seizing the conservative leadership in 1975, "I'm a *conviction* politician." And her convictions, as she described them, were suitably simple: You must work if you would eat; you cannot



**The Disenchanted Isle:  
Mrs. Thatcher's Capitalist  
Revolution**

By Charles Dellheim  
W.W. Norton & Co.  
416 pp., \$25



have what you cannot afford; you must help yourself before you help others. A grocer's daughter weaned on "sound money" and "good housekeeping," she had no patience for the old Tory Party's paternal rhetoric of caring and compassion. Work, thrift, perseverance, self-help: these were the famous "Victorian virtues" that would restore order to Britain. And though in office she would dress them up with all sorts of philosophic-economic justifications borrowed from Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, she never had any intellectual need of them herself. "I came to office with one deliberate intent," she said in 1984. "To change Britain from a dependent to a self-reliant society—from a give-it-to-me to a do-it-yourself nation; to a get-up-and-go instead of a sit-back-and-wait-for-it Britain." In short, hers was to be a cultural revolution.

Yet, as Dellheim observes, this is precisely where Thatcher foundered. The economic revolution moved forward readily enough—the unions were smashed, state industries sold, the foundations of the welfare state eroded. But no amount of deregulatory legislation, it turned out, could undo the *cordon sanitaire* that kept business out of polite conversation. Never mind unemployment, never mind poverty, never mind the growing divide between rich and poor, between North and South. Never mind that by 1990 Thatcher's government had left Britain "two nations" as at no other time in its history. Mrs. Thatcher's failure was "her inability to spur widespread commitment to the capitalist revolution." Where she would go she failed to inspire others to follow, and so she fell, leaving Britain a "disenchanted isle, more aware of the need to earn its way in the world, but less able to captivate or inspire it."

Less able to captivate or inspire "the world," that is. The antecedent is ambiguous, but the sense of the sentence is clear: Thatcher left Britain a more clear-sighted but less charming place. It's a foreigner's perspective, and Dellheim is certainly entitled to it. But it casually glosses over the destructive effects of Thatcherism not just on Britain's charm—though these are real enough—but on its industrial and productive life as well. Like many of those who trade in these "culturalist" explanations for economic decline, Dellheim tends to write in terms of two mutually opposed possibilities: romantic, dewey-eyed, anti-industrial nostalgia on the one hand; realistic, steely-eyed, unflinching progress on the other.

The truth, though, is that nostalgia and progress are two sides of the same coin in their equal disregard for a people's reasonable needs, and at their best the British have dispensed with both. Great Britain is and always has been one of the world's industrially developed nations. Its economic strength has declined relative to others for a number of structural reasons having to do with its early start, its historical commitment (even to its own disadvantage) to free trade, and the geographically fickle nature of industrial capitalism. The British had their day, and if it passed, it was not for want of effort.

Yet there is much to be said for the view that the British have never been as zealously capitalist as the Americans

whom Margaret Thatcher so admired. And this, I would suggest, is because they have shrewdly sensed the attendant economic dangers. Look at what Thatcherism did to the British economy. She spoke of work, energy, respectability, responsibility and thrift. But what her reckless "privatization" of industry in fact provoked was a highly irresponsible, speculative mania. Paper prosperity rebounded under her regime, but productivity remained flat. The "nation of home-owners" she liked to talk about looked more like nation of debtors every bit as enslaved to the banks as they had ever been to the welfare state. The "economic miracle" for which she claimed credit was always a mirage, and that, more than any culturally ingrained resistance to progress, was why she finally had to go. She was doing too much economic damage.

And she was standing too intolerantly in the way of European union. Dellheim's interests are wholly domestic. He has little to say about the immediate occasion of her fall, which is too bad, because it was highly revealing of Thatcherism's intellectual incoherence. Mrs. Thatcher had always been a tub-thumping nationalist; it was part of her persistent electoral appeal. But the sovereignty of the nation sits uncomfortably alongside the sovereignty of the market. In trying to embrace economic nationalism and free-market capitalism simultaneously, Thatcher left her party impaled on a philosophical contradiction from which it has been unable to free itself. Europhobia was at the root of the backbench rebellion that Major faced last June, and though he managed to stare it down, his party's general electoral prospects are hardly encouraging. Disenchanted? Try disgusted. If the evidence of opinion polls projecting a Labor landslide at the next election is to be believed, the British are at last fed up with a "capitalist revolution" that (*pace* Dellheim) was neither necessary nor glorious. It was divisive and destructive, cold and hard. It needs no tears shed over it.

Stewart Weaver is associate professor of history at the University of Rochester and the author of *John Field and the Politics of Popular Radicalism, 1832-1847* (Oxford University Press).

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# Being clean

By Leora Tanenbaum

If you're like most people, you showered and brushed your teeth this morning. Whether you've been influenced by soap commercials or parental threats, you no doubt believe that keeping clean is a prerequisite to gaining approval from friends and colleagues. Yet 150 years ago the opposite was true. In the first half of the 19th century, there was no plumbing, and most people lived in filth. Few Americans bathed, and hardly anyone wore underwear. Dirt was seen as something positive—while soap was avoided lest it remove oils from the skin.

That most Americans today have unambivalently come to accept John Wesley's famous adage—cleanliness is a virtue “next to Godliness”—shows how much we've learned about bacteria and disease. According to Suellen Hoy, author of *Chasing Dirt*, an amusing social history of America's relationship with dirt and cleanliness, the transformation also sheds light on the equation of “clean” with “respectable” and “middle class” and the socialization of immigrants and women. *Chasing Dirt* reminds us that the bathroom is political.

In 1832, when the country's first major cholera epidemic swept through urban areas, killing its victims within hours or days, American attitudes about cleanliness started to change. Shortly thereafter, health reformers began lecturing about the benefits of bathing in an effort to curb the disease. Their efforts focused on wives and mothers, who were considered responsible for the health and comfort of their families. Civil War relief workers further institutionalized sanitation with the creation of the United States Sanitary Commission. Besides sharply reducing deaths from disease, the commission wrapped “cleanliness and order in the mantle of patriotism and victory,” Hoy writes.

In an effort to curb outbreaks of disease after the

Civil War, cities began to establish municipal health boards, which created sewage systems and regulated garbage collection. But change in the day-to-day life of most citizens crawled forward slowly. “Not until the 1880s and 1890s,” Hoy writes, “did the idea become prevalent that running water was a household necessity.” Even then, this necessity remained out of reach for the urban poor. Settlement workers investigating the cause of a 1902 typhoid epidemic in the Chicago slums found that only 48 percent of the dwellings there had modern plumbing.

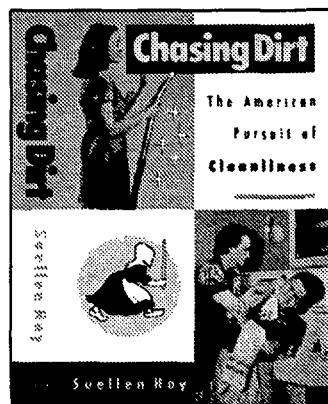
However, cleanliness did gain social and political cachet among reformers of the lower classes, as immigrants (many of whom had never used a toothbrush) flooded the country. “[C]onfrontation with racial and cultural outsiders ... transformed cleanliness from a public health concern into a moral and patriotic one,” Hoy writes. “By linking the toothbrush to patriotism, Americanizers clearly demonstrated that becoming American involved a total makeover of personal habits and loyalties.”

As Hoy notes, “people who had darker skins than Anglo-Saxons—always African-Americans and frequently Jews and southern Italians—usually suffered a stamp of inferiority” because the color black was associated with dirt. In the years following emancipation, Booker T. Washington endorsed cleanliness, not protest, as a means to improved economic opportunities and political rights for blacks. Yet no matter how much the students at his Tuskegee Institute in Alabama swept their rooms and cleaned their bedding, “whites found it nearly impossible to forgive them their color.”

Hoy's social history is at its best when it traces the evolution of women's burdens to cook, wash dishes, scrub floors, beat rugs, launder linens, make grocery lists, do the shopping—and then take care of the kids. Not only have women alone been expected to maintain a spotless home, but their level of personal cleanliness has marked them in a way that men's has not, Hoy points out. As the threat of contagious diseases significantly diminished, manufacturers played ever more roughly with female consumers' fears of spinsterhood and sexual unattractiveness. In the 1930s, for instance, an ad for Williams Shaving Cream portrayed Williams shavers as well-groomed businessmen who sat confidently behind large, important-looking desks. These men looked “disapprovingly on women at the office” who suffered from bad breath or perspiration odors.

Despite carefully recording such ideological nuances within the clean ideal, Hoy sensibly doesn't sell short cleanliness per se. Still, the power of the stigma attached to being less than clean is impressive. Even when one group penetrates the charmed circle of the clean, it's often at the expense of others: By hiring low-income, minority women to chase dirt in their stead, many middle-class women have, without lifting a finger, finally achieved the status afforded by gleaming countertops. Of course, those who wield the mops are still considered dirty.

Leora Tanenbaum is a contributing writer at the *Boston Phoenix* and a regular contributor to *In These Times*.



**Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness**  
By Suellen Hoy  
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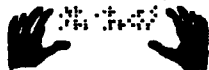
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*Continued from page 40*

were, overall, fairly good; Mumia Abu Jamal is nothing if not a talented writer. But the backlash was instantaneous and strong. In Philadelphia, the Fraternal Order of Police had a collective fit, and tried to get the publisher to quash the book. The added publicity helped sales, which quickly totaled around 50,000 copies.

But on June 1, just before Mumia's lawyers were scheduled to petition for a retrial, Pennsylvania Gov. Thomas Ridge set the date of execution for August 17. Whereupon, in short order, the backlash generated its own backlash. Mumia Abu Jamal suddenly became the most famous Death Row prisoner in the world.

In June, I went to one of the meetings called to protest the sentence. It was held in an African-American church in Washington, D.C. And it was, let us say, a gathering of the faithful—if not quite the usual flock that assembled there. As a reader of far-left newspapers like the *Workers Vanguard* and other such curiosities, I had been following Abu Jamal's case for years. And so had most of the rest of the crowd. The rhetoric was familiar—too familiar. People had had enough of the right-wing onslaught! This wasn't about saving one man's life—it was about fighting the entire racist system! And so on.

You might have thought it was 1968, until you noticed how thin the crowd was—and how threadbare the rhetoric sounded, even coming from people who sincerely wanted to keep Abu Jamal from being executed. No one seemed willing to pronounce the awful, humbling truth. Namely: This wasn't about fighting the racist system—it was about saving one man's life.

Yet there was energy in it. Many a petition circulated, and meetings were planned and posters by the thousands went up on city streets everywhere. People converged on Philadelphia to demonstrate. The fax and phone numbers of Judge Sabo and of the governor of Pennsylvania circulated among Mumia's supporters. Calls and letters of protest poured in. When the phone and fax lines were disconnected, someone very quickly managed to get hold of the new numbers—and these, thanks to the power of e-mail, were instantly in the hands of activists all over the planet.

In Paris, deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida offered his thoughts on Abu Jamal's plight to the readers of *Le Monde*; the prisoner's writings reminded him of Jean Genet and George Jackson, and made him "the voice of the voiceless." Trade unionists and movie stars have been signing petitions and donating money, and somebody even bombed the Citibank branch in Athens in protest.

Then, on August 7, 10 days before Mumia was scheduled to die by lethal injection, Judge Sabo issued a stay of execution. The legal team is back to work trying to get him a new trial. And it pushes against the full weight of judicial inertia: In late August, Sabo denied Abu Jamal's petition for a retrial, as did the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

So there the matter sits. The appeals process grinds on, slowly, as it has for years. Mumia Abu Jamal's legal

situation does not appear to have changed all that much—though it is reported that he now has severe blisters on his wrists and ankles from being shackled repeatedly during his transport from prison to the courtroom. He is back in limbo.

And yet as much as things seem to remain the same, everything has changed. Before this summer, few people outside of Pennsylvania had heard of Mumia Abu Jamal. Today, he stands before world opinion—or at least a sizable portion of it—as a symbol. But of what, exactly?

There are some 3,000 people awaiting execution in American prisons. And the statistics indicate that Death Row is a Jim Crow establishment. "Blacks who kill whites," as Justice William Brennan wrote in his dissent from the Supreme Court's decision in *McCleskey vs. Kemp*, "are sentenced to death at nearly 22 times the rate of blacks who kill blacks, and more than 7 times the rate of whites who kill blacks. In addition, prosecutors seek the death penalty for 70 percent of black defendants with white victims, and only 19 percent of white defendants with black victims."

These numbers are egregious. Consider what they imply. A black person killing a white person in the heat of passion—as, I believe, Abu Jamal probably did upon finding Faulkner beating his brother with a flashlight—is, in effect, always already "more guilty" in the eyes of the law than a white person who after premeditation kills a black.

It ought to be possible to acknowledge this reality without deducing from it that Abu Jamal is innocent. Nor need one believe that to agree that his trial in 1982 was unfair and that he deserves another hearing. Yet the regular communiqués sent out by some of Abu Jamal's supporters tell another story. Every piece of evidence against him is a plant; and every article casting doubt upon the theory of a third gunman, a continuation of the COINTELPRO campaign that gathered some 700 pages of documents on Abu Jamal over the years.

Reading such arguments—if that is the word for such leaps of faith—one senses a new line of conspiracy theory spinning out. People now discourse very learnedly on numerous topics about which, really, they know nothing: say, the bullet trajectories through Officer Faulkner's body or the precise nature of police-prostitute relations in certain Philadelphia neighborhoods. This is morbid and desperate. And it will not save one life.

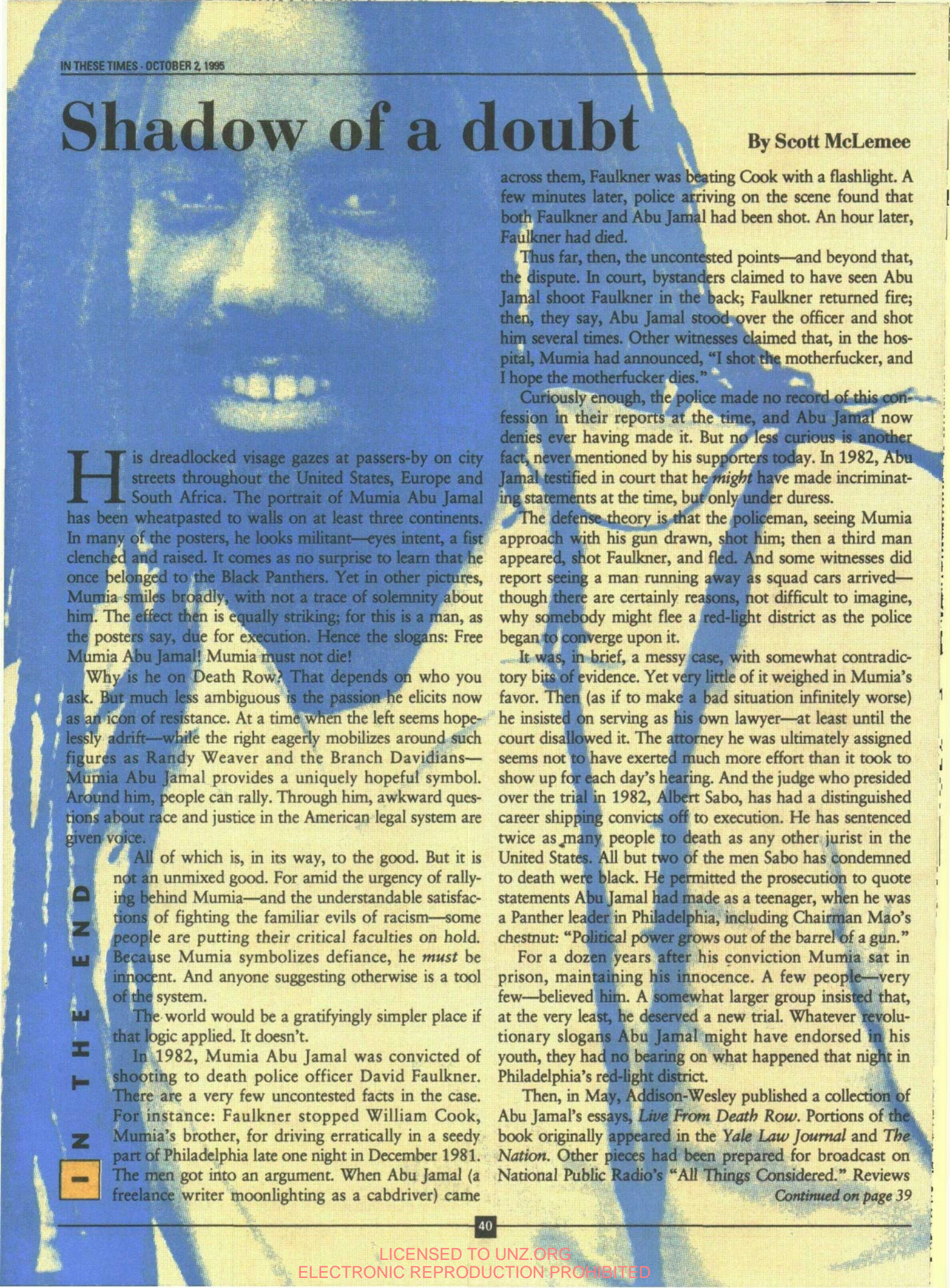
Abu Jamal deserves a new trial, not followers. Beyond the circle of those who follow every twist of the case with fanatical attention, countless people are concerned about his fate. Some sign petitions or give money if they can. Others, seeing a poster on the street, know just enough about Abu Jamal's case to feel embittered that one more African-American is slated to die.

But a warning. If Judge Sabo and the state of Pennsylvania follow their intended course—if after however long a delay, Abu Jamal is executed—then questions of justice are moot. Discussions of guilt or innocence are off. For there is no rage quite like that of a movement that finds a martyr. ◀



# Shadow of a doubt

By Scott McLemee



**H**is dreadlocked visage gazes at passers-by on city streets throughout the United States, Europe and South Africa. The portrait of Mumia Abu Jamal has been wheatpasted to walls on at least three continents. In many of the posters, he looks militant—eyes intent, a fist clenched and raised. It comes as no surprise to learn that he once belonged to the Black Panthers. Yet in other pictures, Mumia smiles broadly, with not a trace of solemnity about him. The effect then is equally striking; for this is a man, as the posters say, due for execution. Hence the slogans: Free Mumia Abu Jamal! Mumia must not die!

Why is he on Death Row? That depends on who you ask. But much less ambiguous is the passion he elicits now as an icon of resistance. At a time when the left seems hopelessly adrift—while the right eagerly mobilizes around such figures as Randy Weaver and the Branch Davidians—Mumia Abu Jamal provides a uniquely hopeful symbol. Around him, people can rally. Through him, awkward questions about race and justice in the American legal system are given voice.

All of which is, in its way, to the good. But it is not an unmixed good. For amid the urgency of rallying behind Mumia—and the understandable satisfactions of fighting the familiar evils of racism—some people are putting their critical faculties on hold. Because Mumia symbolizes defiance, he *must* be innocent. And anyone suggesting otherwise is a tool of the system.

The world would be a gratifyingly simpler place if that logic applied. It doesn't.

In 1982, Mumia Abu Jamal was convicted of shooting to death police officer David Faulkner. There are a very few uncontested facts in the case. For instance: Faulkner stopped William Cook, Mumia's brother, for driving erratically in a seedy part of Philadelphia late one night in December 1981. The men got into an argument. When Abu Jamal (a freelance writer moonlighting as a cabdriver) came

across them, Faulkner was beating Cook with a flashlight. A few minutes later, police arriving on the scene found that both Faulkner and Abu Jamal had been shot. An hour later, Faulkner had died.

Thus far, then, the uncontested points—and beyond that, the dispute. In court, bystanders claimed to have seen Abu Jamal shoot Faulkner in the back; Faulkner returned fire; then, they say, Abu Jamal stood over the officer and shot him several times. Other witnesses claimed that, in the hospital, Mumia had announced, "I shot the motherfucker, and I hope the motherfucker dies."

Curiously enough, the police made no record of this confession in their reports at the time, and Abu Jamal now denies ever having made it. But no less curious is another fact, never mentioned by his supporters today. In 1982, Abu Jamal testified in court that he *might* have made incriminating statements at the time, but only under duress.

The defense theory is that the policeman, seeing Mumia approach with his gun drawn, shot him; then a third man appeared, shot Faulkner, and fled. And some witnesses did report seeing a man running away as squad cars arrived—though there are certainly reasons, not difficult to imagine, why somebody might flee a red-light district as the police began to converge upon it.

It was, in brief, a messy case, with somewhat contradictory bits of evidence. Yet very little of it weighed in Mumia's favor. Then (as if to make a bad situation infinitely worse) he insisted on serving as his own lawyer—at least until the court disallowed it. The attorney he was ultimately assigned seems not to have exerted much more effort than it took to show up for each day's hearing. And the judge who presided over the trial in 1982, Albert Sabo, has had a distinguished career shipping convicts off to execution. He has sentenced twice as many people to death as any other jurist in the United States. All but two of the men Sabo has condemned to death were black. He permitted the prosecution to quote statements Abu Jamal had made as a teenager, when he was a Panther leader in Philadelphia, including Chairman Mao's chestnut: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

For a dozen years after his conviction Mumia sat in prison, maintaining his innocence. A few people—very few—believed him. A somewhat larger group insisted that, at the very least, he deserved a new trial. Whatever revolutionary slogans Abu Jamal might have endorsed in his youth, they had no bearing on what happened that night in Philadelphia's red-light district.

Then, in May, Addison-Wesley published a collection of Abu Jamal's essays, *Live From Death Row*. Portions of the book originally appeared in the *Yale Law Journal* and *The Nation*. Other pieces had been prepared for broadcast on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." Reviews

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